

SECTION 3: RECREATIONAL ISSUES OF STATEWIDE IMPORTANCE

Changing conditions and trends have far reaching implications for recreation and open space planning. According to *Park, Recreation, Open Space and Greenway Guidelines* (1996) developed for the National Recreation and Park Association and the American Academy for Park and Recreation Administration, this has meant a greater emphasis on comprehensive open space and greenway planning, and a greater integration of recreation, open space, and transportation goals. There is also a growing trend towards more collaboration among recreation providers, and between community parks and schools. Other trends include greater inclusion of green spaces as part of downtown and neighborhood revitalization, and a heightened recognition of the role recreation and open space play in contributing to more livable, sustainable communities.

The six issues discussed in this next section includes information and data from a variety of sources, along with input from the SCORP Steering Committee, larger SCORP Public Advisory Committee and other comments received during the course of the planning process. Open-ended responses from the SCORP Stakeholder Group Survey (See **Appendix C-2**) were helpful in framing objectives and strategies aimed at addressing issues. The six issues are summarized below:

- Stewardship of the Resource Base for Outdoor Recreation
- Providing Different, Sometimes Competing, Recreational Opportunities
- Apply Limited Financial And Human Resources To Address A Range Of Recreation Needs
- Education Of Recreational Users, Municipalities And Landowners About Responsible Behavior, Laws, and Liability
- Impacts Of Existing Land Use Patterns On Recreational Opportunities
- Importance of Local Outdoor Recreation Opportunities and Open Space Protection in Promoting Increased Health and Wellness

Under each of the six issue sections, discussion starts with a section summary, highlighting major points and findings, including general trends expressed during the early stages of the SCORP public involvement process. This is followed by a more detailed discussion of the issue, especially as it relates to New Hampshire.

This discussion is then followed by a set of recommendations containing goals, objectives, and strategies that have been identified with the assistance of the SCORP Steering Committee and SCORP Public Advisory Committee to help address this issue in New Hampshire. Some recommended strategies are specifically targeted towards the allocation of Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) monies¹. Others represent broader policy or practical recommendations.

¹ Strategies denoted by (LWCF) represent recommendations targeted towards New Hampshire's apportionment of Land and Water Conservation Fund monies.

LWCF Administration

LWCF administration in New Hampshire is coordinated through the Department of Resources and Economic Development – Division of Parks and Recreation. DRED oversees the Open Project Selection Process (OPSP) to aid state allocation of LWCF monies. This process is informed through SCORP planning efforts.

The OPSP process contains a set of criteria and point awards used to rank projects and allocate LWCF funds. These selection criteria are reviewed and revised by an OPSP Advisory Panel and the SCORP recommendations provide guidance for modifying or adding criteria based on updated information. Membership on the OPSP Advisory Panel includes a range of agencies and organizations representing recreation and conservation interests. Please refer to **Appendix F** for more information about the OPSP process and how decisions about LWCF allocations are made in New Hampshire.

While helping to set LWCF priorities is a required function of a SCORP, New Hampshire's plan goes beyond this requirement to also establish recommendations aimed at addressing a wider set of New Hampshire's outdoor recreation issues. These recommendations are targeted towards many different agencies and organizations. This reflects the fact that outdoor recreation issues far outreach any single agency, and resolving issues will require coordination, partnerships, and collaboration. A resource list containing information about a range of recreation-related organizations and agencies is found in **Appendix D**. Not every agency and organization has been listed in this list. Efforts will be made update and expand this list over time.

While emphasis must be placed on addressing these individual issues, there is also an overarching need to improve upon the way outdoor recreation is incorporated into larger, broader decision-making in the state, and on the way the SCORP planning process is undertaken in future years. SCORP planning should be an on-going continuing effort with emphasis on implementation. The state should also continue improve upon its efforts to include a wide range of perspectives in ongoing recreation planning work. The Stakeholder Group Survey (**Appendix C-1 & 2**) was a first step in involving a larger audience in the planning process.

STEWARDSHIP OF THE NATURAL RESOURCE BASE FOR OUTDOOR RECREATION

SUMMARY

New Hampshire is facing increased pressure on its existing resource base. Tourism continues to play a key role in the state's economy. Visitation rates are increasing (e.g. State Parks) and development pressures and population growth continue, especially in the southern part of the state.

- Recreational use can have negative impacts on natural resources (i.e. trail erosion, introduction of exotic species, wildlife impacts).
- Some feel that certain recreational activities have greater negative impacts on the resource base and should be limited or restricted.
- Others feel that all types of use should be allowed on any publicly held land.
- Some of the most popular recreational activities in the state (e.g. walking, wildlife watching, hiking) as identified in the *Statewide Outdoor Recreation Needs Assessment* (UNH, 1997) are highly dependent on open space and tracts of undeveloped lands.
- This same statewide outdoor recreation survey shows that residents view the protection of natural landscapes and natural areas as highly important management objectives. About 71 percent felt that setting aside natural areas from development was either a very or most important management objective of the state. Seventy six percent felt it is very or most important to protect typical examples of New Hampshire's natural regions.
- Protection of existing greenways trail corridors has become an increasing problem due to changes in land ownership, private land closures, and increased development (*Comprehensive Statewide Trails Study*, 1997).
- Private lands (current use, easements) play an important role, alongside public lands, in protecting the resource base and providing for certain traditional forms of recreation.
- According to *New Hampshire's Changing Landscape* (1999), the southern half of the state has 90 percent of the population but only 30 percent of the state's undeveloped land. Some towns in the southern part of the state have less than one acre of land per person. The current network of conservation lands does not adequately protect many of the known rare plant and animal species.

OVERVIEW

Continued conservation and stewardship of the resource base is critical to maintaining a wide range of recreational opportunities. Without concerted efforts to protect open space, both the quality and quantity of many of the most popular outdoor recreational opportunities is likely to deteriorate. This stands to become an even greater issue as competing pressures on existing open space grow and demand for outdoor recreation continues to rise.

Of course, the benefits of land and water protection extend beyond outdoor recreation opportunities. Protected lands and open space help protect our water supplies, preserve important wildlife habitat as well as rare and endangered species, help maintain community identity, and protect our natural and cultural heritage. In short, open space is critical to maintaining New Hampshire's quality of life. Given all of these reasons, including opportunities for outdoor recreation, it is of utmost importance to identify and protect important natural lands and resources, as well as practice good stewardship to maintain the health of these resources for future generations.

As population increases and undeveloped land is converted to other uses, large tracts of un-fragmented open space are lost. Open space planning on a local, regional, and statewide level will become ever more important to help identify critical areas, identify how they can be protected, and understand how these areas can be linked together through greenways and natural corridors. From a recreation perspective, it is often the trail linkages found within the corridors and greenways themselves that are of key importance. Planning for trail corridors and greenways should be considered hand in hand with open space planning efforts.

The relationship between land and water conservation and recreation is not necessarily static. Unmanaged recreation can also bring negative impacts to the very resources on which it depends. Once land is placed under permanent conservation, it still needs long-term management and stewardship to protect important resources. Good planning, management and stewardship are important to limit potential impacts to ecologically sensitive areas and wildlife, as well as to maintain quality recreational experiences.

NEW HAMPSHIRE CONDITIONS AND TRENDS

Land protection and resource conservation are important to New Hampshire residents. Some of the most popular recreational activities in the state (e.g. walking, wildlife watching, hiking) as identified in the *Statewide Outdoor Recreation Needs Assessment* (UNH, 1997) are highly dependent on open space and tracts of undeveloped lands. This same statewide outdoor recreation survey shows that residents view the protection of natural landscapes and natural areas as highly important management objectives. About 71 percent felt that setting aside natural areas from development was either a very or most important management objective of the state. Seventy six percent felt it is very or most important to protect typical examples of New Hampshire's natural regions.

Public and Private Conservation

Resource conservation efforts in New Hampshire have a long tradition in both the public and private arena. Likewise, lands under public and private ownership both offer important outdoor recreation opportunities. Different types of ownership often bring different management objectives. This, in turn, brings different opportunities for outdoor recreation and varying levels of public access.

Parks, for example, often provide opportunities for a wide range of activities such as picnicking, swimming, camping, or mountain biking, while many conservation easements

or privately held tracts of open space may only offer access for traditional activities such as hiking, bird-watching, and cross country skiing. A main function and purpose of many public park lands is to provide and promote opportunities for public recreation while maintaining important green space. On the contrary, many private lands or lands under easement may be primarily focused on maintaining a working forest or protecting water supply lands, though provisions are often made to permit (or guarantee) certain forms of public access.

Public lands in New Hampshire are owned and managed by a range of federal, state, regional and local agencies. Other undeveloped lands, though not permanently protected, include those that qualify for important tax incentives to remain undeveloped (e.g. Current Use). Private lands with permanent protection include those owned by private conservation organizations, such as the Society for the Protection of New Hampshire or The Nature Conservancy, and those under easement with a private or public organization.

About 22 percent of the land base in New Hampshire is permanently protected through a public entity or private non-profit organization. Looking closer, about 56 percent of these protected lands fall under federal control within the White Mountain National Forest. Over 70 percent of New Hampshire's protected lands lie within the northern half of the state.

Even with this range of efforts, undeveloped land continues to be developed at a fast pace and is cause for continued concern. According to *New Hampshire's Changing Landscapes* (1999), prepared by the Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests and the New Hampshire Chapter of the Nature Conservancy, New Hampshire is the fastest growing state in the Northeast, growing 6.8 percent between 1990-1998. About half of this growth is due to in-migration, or people moving to New Hampshire from other states.

The report also indicates that overall forest cover in New Hampshire is declining. Forest cover, at a high of 87 percent in 1983, fell to 83 percent in 1993. Compounding this general trend is the drift towards increased fragmentation of existing undeveloped lands. This trend is expected to continue, with the greatest loss and fragmentation of forested land anticipated in the southeastern tier of the state (Rockingham, Hillsborough, and Strafford Counties).

Additional analysis found that only 22.2 percent of the state's high-value wetlands are under permanent protection, and less than 25 percent of known rare plant and animal species, and only 40 percent of classified rare natural community types, respectively, are adequately protected by existing conservation lands. The New Hampshire Fish and Game Department through its [Non Game and Endangered Wildlife Program](#), the [New Hampshire Natural Heritage Inventory](#), along with private organizations such as the New Hampshire Chapter of the Nature Conservancy, the Audubon Society of New Hampshire, and the Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests, are all working to enhance understanding of important rare and endangered species across the state and foster protection of resources that protect these resources.

Together, many of these organizations and others are part of the [New Hampshire Living Legacy](#) project, formerly the NH Ecological Reserve System Project. This project, coordinated through UNH Cooperative Extension, is a collaborative effort aimed at establishing and supporting "...a well-coordinated, comprehensive system of public and private lands voluntarily dedicated to protecting the full spectrum of biological diversity in New Hampshire." This partnership, among other things, looks to develop new conservation tools, increase public understanding of the values of biodiversity and opportunities for conserving these values, promote research and tracking capabilities of existing agencies, understand the relationship between biodiversity (and biodiversity protection) and other land uses, and support and integrate the Living Legacy Project into existing programs, agencies and conservation lands.

[LCHIP](#). Concerns about these trends are underscored by the recent legislative support for the Land and Community Heritage Investment Program (LCHIP). Leaders in New Hampshire recognized the important role natural and cultural resources play in promoting a good quality of life in New Hampshire, and the need to support statewide funding efforts to help communities and non-profit organizations make a difference at a local or regional level. This program, established in 2000 under RSA 227-A, has provided over \$9 million in grants (to date) aimed at protecting important natural, historical, and cultural resources across the state. By the end of fiscal year 2003, LCHIP will award its final \$6 million in secured appropriations.

Levels of future funding for LCHIP remain a question heading into the next fiscal year (2004). The Land and Community Heritage Authority, created by the legislature in 1998, recommended that LCHIP be permanently funded at \$12 million annually to meet the growing and pressing needs for resource protection in New Hampshire. Thus far, LCHIP has received annual funding short of this recommended level. Recent state budget shortfalls and expected economic tightening will likely make LCHIP an important topic in the next legislative session.

Recent Conservation Efforts

In the past year, New Hampshire has succeeded in protecting large tracts of lands in northern New Hampshire, through a mix of federal, state, and private efforts and in-kind contributions. The largest and best example is represented by the Connecticut Lakes Head Waters project in the northern part of the state. This massive conservation effort consists of 141,400 acres of private timberland encumbered by a state-held conservation easement, a 25,000 acre natural area owned by the State and encumbered by a Nature Conservancy easement, as well as a 100 acre piece that will be added to an existing state-run (DRED) campground.

This large-scale conservation effort will benefit the entire state. In addition to preserving important landscape scale natural habitats, the headwaters of the Connecticut River and productive forestlands, these lands will retain deeded rights to public access in perpetuity. Management or stewardship plans will be developed for forestry, as well as recreation, to help insure this significant area will be well managed into the future.

As important as these large-scale efforts are in protecting state resources, they alone will not insure New Hampshire's natural and cultural resource base is maintained. Local and regional efforts are also critically important to help New Hampshire communities maintain individual identity, retain rural or traditional character, keep costs of community services from rising quickly, and keep lands open to traditional types of recreational activities.

The Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests recently (2001) produced a working paper entitled *New Hampshire Everlasting; An Initiative to Conserve our Quality-of-Life*. This paper reflects upon the importance of undeveloped lands to communities in New Hampshire and offers a series of goals to "...guide the selection and conservation of lands for communities, forestry, habitat, clean waters, and farming." The vision, statewide, is to protect an additional one million acres in the next 25 years. A set of five goals is offered to address this vision. The first goal has direct links to outdoor recreation:

"Support every community in conserving, with partners, at least twenty-five percent of its lands for a network of trails, parks, farms, and forests where people can connect with the natural world". ("NH Everlasting", pg 6)."

Recreation lands identified in this 25 percent goal include village and downtown parks, outdoor recreation fields, town forests, lands with scenic beauty and community character, and a recreation and commuter trail network. These lands are part of a larger 'green infrastructure' that provides critical benefits to both individuals and communities.

This 2001 paper emphasizes that a range of conservation lands and parks, including those lands that are close to home, are needed to support a good quality of life. Currently, about 50 percent of communities in New Hampshire have less than 10 percent of their lands permanently conserved. Of those that do have 25 percent of their lands permanently conserved, most are located in the northern part of the state.

The good news is that almost all of New Hampshire's communities have at least 25 percent of their land base still undeveloped. So the possibility for permanent land protection remains strong. Meeting this goal will take creative partnerships and concerted efforts by agencies, municipalities, and private organizations alike.

Partnerships. Regional and local land trusts, as well as local conservation commissions are becoming increasingly important players in protecting critical habitats and open space lands in New Hampshire communities. On a local level, community leaders are increasingly partnering with a local or regional land trust to protect local lands or secure conservation easements on lands of significance. This partnership takes advantage of a land trust's expertise in both completing sometimes-complicated land transactions and holding conservation lands in perpetuity, while utilizing local knowledge, planning efforts, and financial resources of the community.

In general, public/private partnerships are critical to protecting natural resources. Limited funds and staffing of public agencies and municipalities limit the ability of government to not only protect lands, but also weave together networks of conservation lands. Private organizations, be it on a national, state, regional or local level, all play key roles in both identifying and protecting important natural resources. One good regional example is the Great Bay Resource Protection Partnership (GBRRP), formed in 1994 to identify and protect significant habitat areas in the Great Bay region. This successful partnership is comprised of statewide, regional, and local non-profit conservation organizations, municipalities, and state and federal agencies. Over the last several years, the GBRRP has produced a Habitat Protection Plan identifying over 14,000 acres of important habitat, organized into 25 Significant Habitat Areas. These Significant Habitat Areas range from 400 to 10,000 acres in size. As of January 2002, this public/private partnership has protected over 3,400 acres through fee purchase, easements, and donations.

Local Financing. Communities are using a range of methods to help fund their conservation goals. Over half of New Hampshire communities (at least 117) are currently taking advantage of [RSA 36-A:5.1](#) which allows a town to dedicate a portion or all of the Land Use Change Tax ([RSA 79-A:7](#)) to a local Conservation Fund. Land use change tax monies are derived from penalties assessed on lands taken out of Current Use. Funds placed in the conservation fund are allowed to accumulate from year to year and may be expended by the Conservation Commission without further approval of the town meeting. The New Hampshire Association of Conservation Commissions retains a list of communities that allocate some or all of the land use change tax monies to the local conservation fund.

**Center for Land Conservation
Assistance**

A new resource center in Concord called the Center for Land Conservation Assistance serves to build the capacity of New Hampshire land trusts and acts as an information and resource center for local and regional land protection efforts. Contact the [Society for the Protection of NH Forests](#) more information.

These land use change tax monies, while often substantial, do not always provide the necessary funds, at the necessary times to secure important tracts of undeveloped lands. Land values in many parts of the state are skyrocketing and undeveloped, buildable parcels are often on the market for only a short time. Even conservation minded landowners cannot always wait for a Town vote in March to sell their property.

Several communities in the southern part of New Hampshire have chosen to pursue open space bonds as a means for addressing this issue. An open space bond, paid back over a period of years at a set interest rate, provides a community with present day access to funds that can be used to help purchase important natural lands or conservation easements over the next few years. Given the current low interest rates, the extraordinary

growth and development seen in recent years, and the escalating land values, many communities have been successful in securing broad-based resident support.

Planning for Resource Protection. An important component of utilizing conservation funds wisely is to proactively plan for open space and conservation. Open space planning is an important aspect of identifying key parcels and developing strategies for their protection, and these efforts can also be incorporated into larger town master planning efforts. Identifying major resource protection needs, setting priorities and producing a plan for addressing these needs are all important aspects of planning for how the community wants to look in the future.

When planning for resource and land conservation, consideration should be given to identifying and seeking protections on lands that adjoin existing conservation lands, in-fill lands that help bridge two conserved areas, and lands that help to create open space corridors and networks of green space.

It is also important to give consideration to lands that can act as buffers around ecologically significant resources (e.g. upland buffers around wetlands, riparian buffers, etc). Many of these lands and buffers not only protect significant resources themselves, but also can provide important opportunities for recreation. For instance, a riparian buffer could help protect important natural resources, while also offering an opportunity for a riverbank walking trail or shore bank fishing.

Hanover's Open Space Priorities Plan

The Town of Hanover prepared an award-winning open space plan in 2000. Hanover understood that while there were a number of different organizations and private landowners involved in land protection efforts, there had never been a concerted town-wide open space planning effort. The Open Space Priorities Plan was developed to provide guidance for acquisition of fee or easement properties using the town's Conservation Fund, to provide a common understanding of existing areas of open space and possible linkages with surrounding towns, and to set a common vision for future land protection efforts in Hanover. The Plan explicitly recognizes that efforts to implement the ideas and strategies will only be achieved in cooperation with willing landowners, will require many years to implement, and will require public funds as well as private, individual efforts. Priorities are established for Conservation/Recreation action areas as well as In-Town Open Space action areas including connectors to link downtown and conservation/recreation areas.

Stewardship. Natural resource stewardship has many different facets, including land management, conservation easement monitoring, research, education, planning, and enforcement. Looking after lands and resources in the long run requires a concerted effort and often a substantial investment. Without adequate long-term stewardship, lands and resources that have been protected on paper may still be subjected to ground events that can threaten long term protection. Too often in the past lands have been acquired for conservation purposes, without adequate consideration of long-term stewardship.

Increasingly, there is growing awareness across the state about the importance of stewardship. Land managers are becoming increasingly aware that there are real costs in managing conservation lands, especially managing for public recreational use. More and more, conservation easement holders seek contributions to a stewardship endowment to help offset the real costs associated with looking after an easement in perpetuity. The Land and Community Heritage Investment Program (LCHIP), as an example, require applicants to prepare a stewardship plan as part of the application process. In addition, LCHIP provides a stewardship contribution for fee and easements lands to help insure that the state's interest in the land is maintained.

Public agencies and private organizations alike often face issues with lack of staffing and resources needed for management, stewardship, research, education and enforcement. In addition, there is some concern that as private landholders, including land trusts and conservation organizations, are faced with increasing costs associated with allowing public use of their lands, there will be a trend towards further restricting or prohibiting public use.

Clearly public use of the resource base, whether publicly or privately held, can bring with it management and stewardship challenges. It is important to expand and broaden the discussion about shared concerns, and recognize that both public and private entities face many of the same challenges. Sharing knowledge about stewardship concerns is a first step. Concerted efforts should be made to build a statewide discussion about this topic and develop better ways of promoting information exchange.

Surface Water

Protecting both the quality and the health of our wetlands and surface waters remains a high priority in the state. The New Hampshire Comparative Risk Project found that three of the top five environmental risks involve water resources of the state. Surface waters provide important sources of drinking water, provide important habitat for a variety of species and provide abundant opportunities for recreation for local residents and tourists alike. As water-based or water-enhanced recreation continues to rise, it becomes increasingly important to consider efforts to protect these water resources.

Both public and private organizations are deeply involved in protecting the quality of the state's water resources. The Department of Environmental Services (DES) is the agency with the main responsibility for protecting the state's water resources. A mission of DES is "*...to ensure that New Hampshire's lakes and ponds, rivers and streams, coastal waters, groundwater and wetlands are clean and support healthy ecosystems, provide habitats for a diversity of plant and animal life, and support appropriate uses.*" Several programs, including [New Hampshire Lakes Management and Protection Program](#) and the [Rivers Management and Protection Program](#) are in place to help coordinate efforts to protect water resources. DES also enforces existing laws aimed at protecting water resources, including [The Comprehensive Shoreland Protection Act](#).

The DES Volunteer Lake Assessment Program is a cooperative program between the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services and lake residents and lake

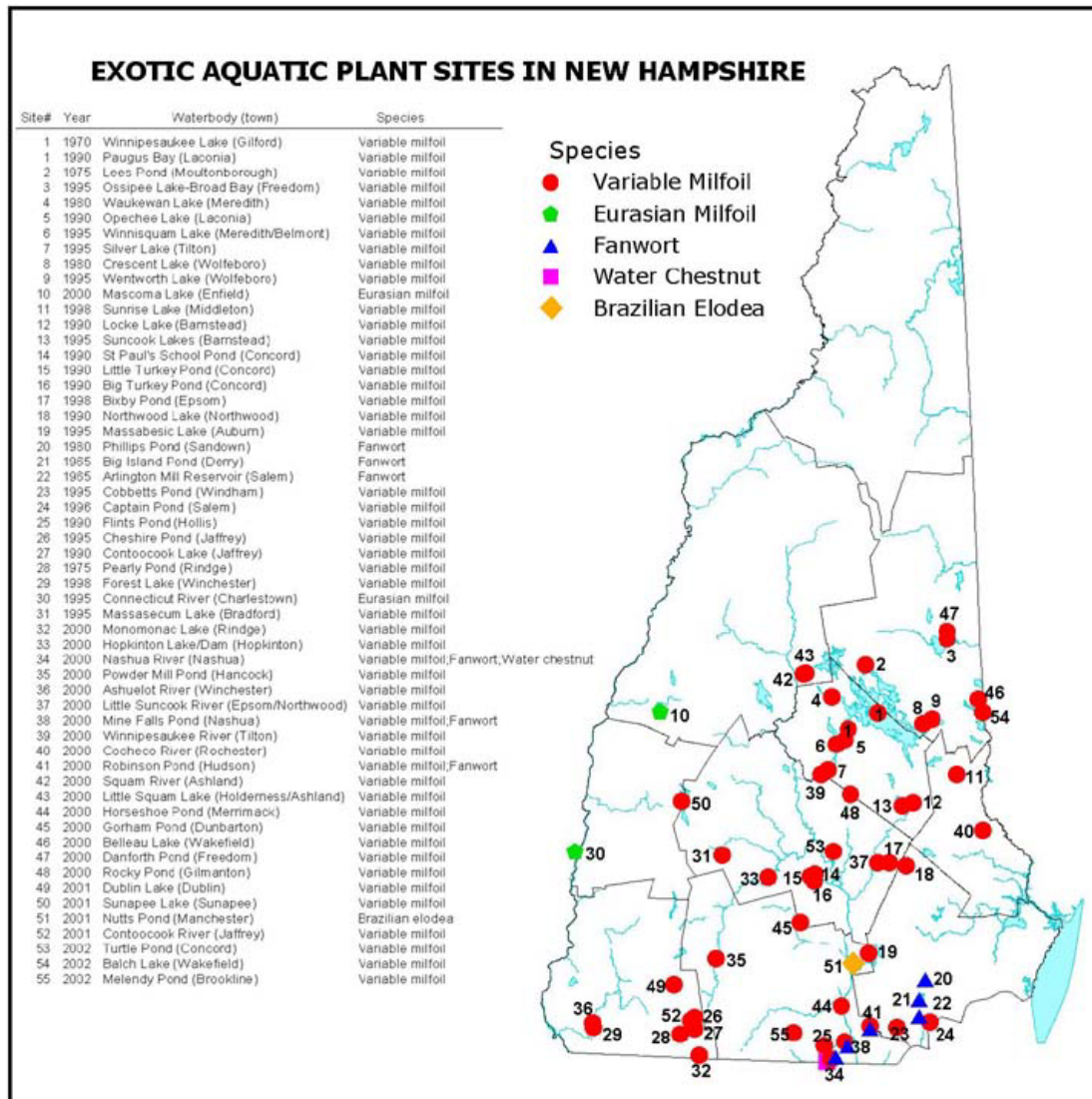
associations. Currently about 130 lakes are monitored under this program. In addition to taking samples from the lake, volunteers sample the streams and rivers that act as tributaries to the lake.

The University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension coordinates the volunteer Lakes Lay Monitoring Program. Through this joint effort between UNH Cooperative Extension and the State of New Hampshire, over 100 lakes are sampled each year using citizen volunteers. This coordinated volunteer effort helps scientists understand water quality trends over time. Water samples are taken on a monthly basis and analyzed for chlorophyll a and total phosphorus, as well as monitoring of water clarity and dissolved oxygen. The [Great Bay Watch](#), in existence for over 10 years, involves volunteers in monitoring water quality in Great Bay and its tributaries.

With increased recreational use of surface water, resource managers are continually focused on preventing the introduction of exotic species such as milfoil, fanwort, and zebra mussels. This past year the General Court expressed increased support of these efforts by enhancing the New Hampshire Clean Lakes Program. [RSA 487:25](#) will increase boat registration fees by \$3. These funds will be placed into the Lake Restoration and Preservation Fund, aimed specifically at the prevention of exotic species. In addition, a number of lakes associations are supporting on-site prevention efforts by serving as “Lake Hosts”, educating boaters about exotic species and ways to prevent introduction.

The DES [Exotic Species Program](#) provides information on different types of exotics that have been found in New Hampshire, and those that have been found in neighboring states. The Program also oversees a volunteer Weed Watcher Program to encourage recreationists, lakes associations, and others to monitor lakes as an early detection method. Figure 12 shows a map depicting locations where exotic species have already been identified.

Figure 12. Locations of Exotic Aquatic Plant Sites in New Hampshire



Source: DES Exotic Species Program Website, 2002.

Recognizing the important role surface waters play in the state's economy, the New Hampshire's Lakes Association is spearheading an effort to examine the economic impacts of lakes in New Hampshire. This three-phase project, currently in Phase II, will examine the economic impacts of swimming, fishing, and boating on the state's economy, as well as the economic impacts of shorefront property and drinking water supplies. The goal is to determine a range of dollar values for these uses and identify the impacts on the economy if environmental conditions change.

Air quality

Air quality can also have impacts on outdoor recreation and tourism. In 1996, New Hampshire's Comparative Risk Project examined issues pertaining to regional air quality. Pollutants include, among others, particulate matter, ground level ozone, acid deposition,

nitrogen, and sulfur oxides. The report highlighted that, as air quality decreases, there will be greater impacts on public health, our economy, ecological integrity, and on our quality of life. In regards to outdoor recreation and quality of life, there are concerns over the negative effects of smog on visibility and aesthetics, such as on hazy or low visibility days in the White Mountains. There are also concerns over human health, particularly for children, the elderly, and those with respiratory problems during poor air quality days in the Whites or on the Seacoast.

Negative impacts on recreational and scenic qualities (decreased visibility and aesthetics) and growing concern over health risks could also translate into real economic impacts. Worsening outdoor air quality could reduce the tourism appeal of some of our most popular destinations. Decisions about air quality take place well beyond state boundaries. Federal air quality and emission standards and the actions of power plants in other parts of the country have direct impacts on New Hampshire's air quality. This will be a growing topic of debate as discussions about federal air quality standards continue and air quality problems in the Northeast continue.

Recreational Vehicle Emissions

There are also concerns about the impacts of motorized recreation engines on air quality (as well as water quality). Marine gasoline engines and non-road recreational engines and vehicles including snowmobiles, off-highway motorcycles, and ATVs, contribute to regional haze and visibility problems in high use areas (e.g. parks, marinas), as well as to ozone formation and particulate matter and carbon monoxide levels. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has issued guidelines for marine gasoline engines and non-road recreation engines beginning with model year 2006.

An effort is already underway in New Hampshire to meet these new requirements for outboard marine engines before 2006. New Hampshire's Clean Marine Engine Initiative consists of a public/private partnership between DES and the Marine Trades Association aimed at phasing-in low-pollution engines prior to the EPA 2006 mandate. The dealers and retailers who sign a voluntary agreement with DES promise to sell low-pollution outboard marine engines on a graduated schedule (percentage sold) up to full compliance by 2006.

Such a partnership and voluntary agreement sets a good model for other types of recreational engines. The State should explore the feasibility of forging a similar partnership with snowmobile and ATV recreational equipment dealers. Such a partnership would help to phase in these upcoming federal requirements in a proactive manner and send a positive message the importance of and commitment of riders to cleaner burning recreational engines.

Along with the efforts of the marine dealers, the State has been converting its fleet of watercraft to be outfitted with low pollution outboard engines. DES, the Fish and Game Department, and particularly the Marine Patrol of the Department of Safety, deserve praise for their efforts to put cleaner outboard engines on their watercraft. Over the last several years, these agencies have been replacing old carbureted engines with new 4-

stroke and 2-stroke engines. Of those boats in the state fleet with outboard engines, 80 percent are running cleaner, low polluting engines on the State's waterways.

New Hampshire's Clean Marine Engine Initiative

In 1996, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) passed a rule requiring new technology, low-pollution outboard marine engines and personal watercraft to be phased-in by 2006. Since low-pollution marine engines became available shortly after the EPA rule took effect, the NH Department of Environmental Services launched a unique initiative to promote the use of these engines. In February 2000, DES and the NH Marine Trades Association (MTA) signed a voluntary agreement (Memorandum of Understanding) to accelerate the phase-in of low-pollution engines prior to the EPA 2006 mandate. The dealers and retailers who signed the voluntary agreement would sell low-pollution outboard marine engines at the following percentage rates per year: 2000, 50 percent, or more; 2001, 75 percent, or more; 2002-2005: 90 percent, or more. In 2000, the participating dealers achieved a 65 percent sales rate and for 2001, a 75 percent sales rate, thus surpassing and achieving the voluntary sales goals for those years. The program has been well received by boaters across New Hampshire and has also served as a model for nine other states.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Stewardship Of The Natural Resource Base For Outdoor Recreation

GOAL: Insure that the quality and quantity of the natural resource base is maintained or enhanced as recreation pressures increase.

I. Objective: Continue to support efforts to identify and protect open space lands.

Strategies

- A. (LWCF) Give priority to land acquisition efforts focused on natural areas/lands identified in existing local, regional, or state plans (e.g. lands might include forests, wetlands, rare natural communities, coastal areas, agricultural lands, etc.).
- B. Support efforts to secure permanent state funding for LCHIP (e.g. encourage groups to endorse and support Citizens for Land and Community Heritage).
- C. Support efforts to secure continued funding for federal programs (e.g. stateside LWCF funding, Forest Legacy, TEA-21, EPA Brownfields, Farm Bill etc.).
- D. Support comprehensive statewide and regional planning for open space, recreation corridors, and greenways (e.g. State, regional, and local open space plans, trail plans etc.).
- E. Educate the public on plans that currently exist (NH Living Legacy Project, Hanover Open Space Plan, etc.).
- F. Expand efforts to fund conservation for outdoor recreation at the local level (e.g. encourage communities to consider open space bonds and/or earmarking all or a portion of the local land use change tax for conservation purposes).
- G. Encourage state, regional, and municipal partnerships with non-profits and land trusts to acquire and protect locally significant open space lands (e.g. New Hampshire Association of Conservation Commissions, Center for Land Conservation Assistance).
- H. Target specific purchases in areas of the state where the fastest growth and usage is taking place (e.g. protect lands near areas experiencing increased development pressure to protect open space lands and recreational opportunities close to home).
- I. Target purchases that protect hydrological units or create or link large contiguous blocks of lands for wildlife and people.
- J. Support efforts to protect scenic views (e.g. encourage and give incentives to landowners to keep fields mowed. Examples might include the NH Fish and Game small grants programs for wildlife or establishing incentives through existing programs like Current Use).

II. Objective: Address environmental and cultural resource impacts from existing recreational facilities and when new recreation facilities/opportunities are developed.

Strategies

- A. (LWCF) Give priority to projects that help redistribute recreational use away from ecologically sensitive areas.
- B. Address impacts to important resources such as wildlife, water quality, rare or endangered species, cultural/historic resources, and sensitive areas when planning and designing trails/facilities and coordinate with affected agencies early in the planning process (e.g. coordinate efforts with NH Natural Heritage Inventory, Division of Historical Resources, etc.).
- C. Evaluate the role tourism and outdoor recreation marketing and development play in creating both positive and negative environmental and cultural resource impacts.
- D. Expand coordinated state review efforts of new development plans on state lands (e.g. State Land Management Team).
- E. Continue existing programs focused on resource protection (e.g. Volunteer Lake Assessment Program, Lakes Lay Monitoring Program, DES Exotic Species Program, NH Living Legacy Project, State Conservation & Rescue Archaeology Program, etc.).
- F. Expand partnerships and initiatives aimed at promoting the use of recreational equipment that utilize cleaner, more environmentally friendly technologies (e.g. NH Clean Marine Initiative).

III. Objective: Address long-term stewardship issues on existing parcels and when parcels are protected or developed.

Strategies:

- A. (LWCF) Give priority to projects that have a prepared stewardship plan in place.
- B. Continue to address enforcement and enforceability of existing environmental laws (e.g. support increased enforcement by State agencies and examine existing limitations given current staff and funding levels).
- C. Encourage and assist landowners in preparing stewardship plans on existing parcels.
- D. Emphasize the importance of stewardship when lands are protected by the state, municipalities and other organizations (e.g. LCHIP requires a stewardship plan to be developed in order to receive grant funding for fee-owned lands and easements.).

- E. Utilize and promote technical assistance programs for providing consultation when parcels are protected (e.g. Center for Land Conservation Assistance, local land trusts, NH Coalition for Sustaining Agriculture, OSP).
- F. Develop partnerships with recreational user groups to steward lands.
- G. Improve information and educational efforts aimed at addressing stewardship concerns and issues faced by both public and private entities.

SELECTED CONTACTS & INFORMATION SOURCES

[National Center for Recreation & Conservation](#)
[National Park Service, Rivers Trails and Conservation Assistance Program](#)
[Land and Community Heritage Investment Program](#)
[DRED – Division of Parks and Recreation](#)
[New Hampshire Fish and Game Department](#)
[New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services](#)
[Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests](#)
[The New Hampshire Association of Conservation Commissions](#)
[New Hampshire Fish and Game Non Game and Endangered Wildlife Program](#)
[New Hampshire Natural Heritage Inventory](#)
[New Hampshire Chapter of the Nature Conservancy](#)
[Audubon Society of New Hampshire](#)
[New Hampshire Lakes Association](#)

PROVIDING DIFFERENT, SOMETIMES COMPETING, RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

SUMMARY

- New Hampshire needs local, close-to-home recreational opportunities, especially alternatives to those opportunities marketed as tourist destinations.
- Issues and conflicts can arise when multiple activities compete for the same resources. This is particularly evident along trails and on public waterways.
- There is a tendency to place restrictions or limits on use as pressure increases or conflicts develop.
- The resource and recreation management concerns may vary depending on location in the state. Concerns may be more related to impacts of tourism in the northern half of the state, and more related to increased development pressure and population growth in the south.
- Universal Design must be considered as recreational opportunities are developed or improved by both state and federal law.
- According to the *Statewide Outdoor Recreation Needs Assessment* (UNH, 1997) some of the most broadly popular activities in the state include wildlife viewing, walking/jogging/running, picnicking, day hiking, and swimming. These activities tend to be globally popular because they are unstructured, require little facility “development”, require no specialized gear or skills, and can be enjoyed by young and old alike. Many of these activities take place close to home.
- US data shows that participation in most outdoor recreational activities is on the rise, either due to population increases, increases in popularity or both (Cordell et. al, 1999). This suggests that both recreational facilities and acquisition of lands for a range of activities is needed.
- New equipment and technology are expanding the type and range of activities people enjoy. (Cordell et. al, 1999).
- Wheeled OHRV registrations in New Hampshire have more than doubled in the last 7 years (NHFG, 2002).
- Nearly 50 percent of respondents to the *Statewide Outdoor Recreation Needs Assessment* (UNH, 1997) agreed or strongly agreed that outdoor recreation areas in New Hampshire are too crowded.
- Forty six percent of respondents in this same 1997 survey indicated that they would be willing to pay higher user fees if the increase would be dedicated to maintenance, acquisition and development of recreation programs and properties.
- The 1997 *Comprehensive Statewide Trails Study* completed by the Office of State Planning found that existing trails are inadequate to meet the current range of recreational activities.

OVERVIEW

Planning for recreation requires the consideration of many factors, including an understanding of changing environmental, cultural, economic, social, and technological

conditions and trends. A number of sources explore these trends and changing conditions. According to *Park, Recreation, Open Space and Greenway Guidelines* (1996) published by the National Recreation and Park Association and the American Academy for Park and Recreation Administration there are numerous trends that impact outdoor recreation planning. Examples include a greater focus on preserving natural resources, increased citizen participation in decision making, an aging society, great strides in information technology (e.g. internet), and increased focus on growth management.

Outdoor Recreation in American Life, A National Assessment of Demand and Supply Trends (Cordell et. al, 1999) underscores the need to address increased recreational use, changing participation patterns, and the potential for greater conflicts of use. This report states that recreation providers should expect that the most popular sites will experience greater and greater congestion in the future and that there will likely be more conflicts among recreationists as they vie for use of the same areas at the same times. Pressure is expected to be particularly heavy at already popular water sites, especially with advances in technology. Travel and tourism should continue to grow as long as transportation and access to resources remains affordable and available.

Other predicted trends identified in this report include the following: access to both developed sites and dispersed areas will become an ever more important management issue; cultural and socio-economic changes will continue to change the type of demand for recreation opportunities; and the number of organized groups (representing a wider variety of outdoor recreation interests) will continue to grow and will have an increasingly large voice in public land management.

Universal Design and Accessibility

Beyond general trends, recreational providers, by law, must consider the universal accessibility of recreational opportunities. With the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) in 1990, communities were given the legal responsibility to provide a reasonable level of access to all users of public facilities and programs. This includes access to public park and recreation facilities. Guidance for facility design can be found via national standards and guidelines.

In September 2002, the US Access Board, under the ADA, issued a set of guidelines for recreational facilities, entitled [*Accessibility Guidelines for Buildings and Facilities; Recreation Facilities*](#). More general information about the Americans with Disabilities Act can be found at the US Department of Justice (DOJ). The DOJ provides access to wide range of information and technical assistance about the ADA, including a link to [*ADA Standards for Accessible Design*](#). Another resource of interest to communities may be the [*ADA Guide for Small Towns*](#) (DOJ, 2000). This booklet, available online, provides an overview of some basic ADA requirements and provides cost-effective tips on how small towns can comply with the ADA.

In New Hampshire, the Governor's Commission on Disability provides information and education about the American's with Disability Act and other regulations that affect

citizens with disabilities. The Commission's stated mission is to 'remove the barriers, architectural or attitudinal, which bar persons with disabilities from participating in the mainstream of society'.

The [Architectural Barrier-Free Design Committee](#) of the Governor's Commission on Disability (under RSA 275-C and RSA 155:39) writes, distributes and enforces the Architectural Barrier-Free Design Code for New Hampshire (ABFDC-NH). The ABFDC-NH adopted the Americans With Disabilities Act Accessibility Guidelines, effective January 1, 1994.

NEW HAMPSHIRE CONDITIONS AND TRENDS

As population grows, tourism remains strong, and participation rates for many activities continue to rise, New Hampshire and its communities must consider how to provide for an increasingly diverse range of outdoor recreational activities. This includes providing outdoor recreation experiences in tourist destinations along with more localized efforts that provide residents with opportunities close to home. According to the Statewide Outdoor Recreation Survey conducted by the University of New Hampshire in 1997, about 50 percent of all outdoor recreation activities take place within 10 miles of home.

Local opportunities for outdoor recreation, particularly human powered recreation, can be important aspects of encouraging physical activity and promoting a healthy lifestyle. Providing close-to-home, convenient opportunities for walking or biking, for instance, helps to incorporate outdoor recreation into people's daily lives, instead of just as a weekend or occasional hobby. This helps insure that participation takes place not only when one travels to a destination, but also when one walks down the street or out the front door. Trails, paths, and bikeways have dual impacts. Pathways serve as a recreational opportunity in and of themselves, and provide important connector or transportation linkages between other local resources.

According to a 1995 National Park Service report titled *Economic Impacts of Protecting Rivers, Trails, and Greenway Corridors*, there are numerous economic benefits of trails and greenways, such as increased property value of nearby homes. In addition to property value increases, studies have shown that trail users spend money on food, beverages, camping, hotels, and bike rentals, which stimulates the local economy. Throughout the state, dozens of regional and community-based trail groups have sprung up. Local conservation commissions are also increasingly becoming involved in the development of trails and greenways.

Tourism and Recreational Use

Outdoor recreation areas marketed as destinations provide an important source of tourism related income for the state. Tourism related dollars are generated both from in-state visitors as well as out-of-state visitors and are an important part of the economy. These destinations, such as the trails and scenery of the White Mountain National Forest and Mount Monadnock, the beaches of the Seacoast, and the clear lakes of the Lakes Region,

help define the character of the state and are an important reason why residents call New Hampshire home.

A recent forum sponsored by the NH Historical Society and the Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests was held to discuss the history and future of the state's tourism industry. In particular there was discussion about tourism promotion and the importance of managing for potential impacts of tourism growth and development. There was broad awareness and recognition of the important role our natural and cultural resources play in the continued health of our state's tourism industry. If these resources are ignored, our tourism industry and our quality of life will be impacted.

The importance of the topic was underscored by the broad organizational representation at the table. The Business and Industry Association, Lodging and Restaurant Association, Monadnock Conservancy, Plymouth State University, University of New Hampshire, and North Country Resource Conservation and Development were on the panel itself, and the audience consisted of a range of agency, non-profit and business interests.

A fair number of state residents are concerned about existing use levels of recreational areas and a substantial number would pay higher fees to alleviate pressure and impacts of use. Nearly one-half of respondents in a *Statewide Outdoor Recreation Needs Assessment* (UNH, 1997) agreed or strongly agreed that outdoor recreation areas in New Hampshire are too crowded. Forty-six percent, in this same survey, indicated that they would be willing to pay higher user fees if the increase would be dedicated to maintenance, acquisition, and development of recreation programs and properties.

In this 1997 study, three destination areas in the state (White Mountain National Forest, Lakes Region, and Seacoast) were examined individually to explore perceptions of crowding and use. Almost 89 percent of residents have visited the White Mountain National Forest (WMNF). While almost all (96 percent) still rate their last visit as good or excellent, about 23 percent said the environmental conditions in the WMNF are declining and almost 32 percent said crowding and congestion are becoming a bigger problem. Nearly 19 percent indicated that they use the WMNF less now in response to crowding.

Almost 81 percent of state residents have visited the Lakes Region of New Hampshire. Most ranked their last visit as either good (55 percent) or excellent (33 percent). Similar to the WMNF, about 24 percent of respondents said the environmental condition of the Lakes Region is declining. Almost 43 percent indicated that crowding and congestion are becoming a bigger problem in this area, with about 17 percent saying they visit the Lakes Region less in response to crowding or congestion.

Approximately 84 percent of respondents have visited the Seacoast. About 53 percent rated their last visit as good and 27 percent excellent. Again, similar to the other two areas, about 22 percent indicated that environmental conditions of the Seacoast are declining. Nearly 44 percent said that crowding and congestion are becoming more of a

problem in this area and 25 percent of residents visit the Seacoast less now because of this.

These three profiles suggest that while residents still view these experiences positively, a significant number of state residents are becoming sensitive to crowding and congestion, in some cases changing their visitation patterns. As use continues to grow or expand in these areas, these issues could become more pronounced and will pose challenges to recreation providers. These trends also suggest that the visitor profiles of these regions may be changing as well.

While many resource and recreation management concerns may be statewide, some may be more evident in one area of the state than another. For example, many communities towards the northern part of the state tend to be dominated by large tracts of publicly owned lands such as the White Mountain National Forest, or large tracts of un-fragmented privately held lands. Tourism promotion, the impacts of recreational use, and the management decisions made on these lands are all of great importance to local communities. Comparatively, there much less publicly held conservation land in the southeastern part of the state, and the sheer number of large un-fragmented parcels is dwindling. Communities in the southeast must increasingly deal with issues surrounding growth, including loss of open space, loss of community character, and increased development pressure.

Existing Plans

There are several existing State plans that provide guidance and direction for addressing specific recreation needs. These plans reflect a great deal of collective wisdom and knowledge in the state, and provide guidance for addressing recreation issues in the SCORP.

Keeping Lands Open to the Public. The 1996 *New Hampshire Forest Resources Plan*, produced by the Forest Resources Plan Steering Committee and the DRED Division of Forests and Lands, identifies a host of action strategies aimed at sustaining New Hampshire's forests and forest economy. One specific action step identified in the plan focuses on continuing the tradition of keeping lands open to the public. Public use generally includes low-impact activities such as hiking, bird watching, fishing, hunting, snowshoeing, and cross-country skiing.

The plan recognizes that New Hampshire has a long held tradition of public use of private lands for recreation, but that changes in land use and liability concerns are restricting these opportunities. Smaller parcel sizes and increased posting due to fear of liability raised concern that these trends would increase pressure on existing public lands, some of which already experience a great deal of use. This increased use of public lands, in turn, may negatively impact both the natural resource base and the recreational experience

The plan suggests the continued promotion of recreational use of private lands by addressing landowner concerns and statewide recreational opportunities. Sample action

steps identified in the 1996 plan include continuing efforts to build coalitions between forest landowners and people who recreate on private lands, provide information about the rights and responsibilities of forest landowners in education programs, and develop programs on responsible use. These concerns mirror those identified by the SCORP Public Advisory Committee and give credence to continuing efforts to address issues related to public use of private lands in the SCORP.

This emphasis is supported by a 2001 survey completed for the Statewide Program of Action to Conserve our Environment (SPACE) by the University of New Hampshire Survey Center. This survey found that 55 percent of Current Use landowners cite recreational use as the number one public benefit they provide (a 19 percent increase from the 1993 survey). About 59 percent of Current Use landowners indicated that their land is not posted against hunting, fishing, hiking, snowshoeing, skiing, or nature observation. Forty-four percent indicated their land is being used most frequently for ‘recreational uses’, compared to 37 percent who indicated their land is primarily used for ‘extractive uses’ (e.g. forestry) and 19 percent who indicated “passive uses” (e.g. wildlife habitat).

As background, the Current Use Taxation Program, under RSA 79-A, was established in 1972 to:

“...encourage the preservation of open space, thus providing a healthful and attractive outdoor environment for work and recreation, maintaining the character of the state’s landscape, and conserving the land, water, forest, agricultural and wildlife resources”.

Under this program, parcels of land (10 acre minimum) are taxed based on their current use value as open space (e.g. active farm or forest land) rather than on their potential value for development purposes.

Under New Hampshire’s Current Use Program landowners can also accept an additional 20 percent “recreation adjustment” to their taxes. This recreation adjustment lowers a landowner’s tax burden by an additional 20 percent if the land is kept open to the public for traditional forms of recreation. As defined by RSA 79-A, the six traditional forms of recreation consist of skiing, snowshoeing, fishing, hunting, hiking, and nature observation; available year-round unless these activities are detrimental to crops on agricultural lands or active forestry operations.

Water Access. In 1991 OSP developed and published the *Public Access Plan for New Hampshire’s Lakes, Ponds, and Rivers* in conjunction with the then-called Public Access Advisory Committee. It includes an evaluation of past and future access efforts and provides a series of recommended strategies for identifying priority sites and sources of funding for improving public access in the state. The plan provided a detailed set of recommendations related to administrative needs, funding, and 10 different goals related to improving water-related access. Some examples of main goals include: to provide and improve year-round access, including for those who are disabled; to provide access

for boaters and non-boaters alike; to minimize abutter conflicts; to identify, analyze and minimize environmental impacts associated with public access; and clearly define roles of public and private access providers.

Two recommendations identified in the Public Access Plan have since become law. In 1992, the New Hampshire legislature passed RSA 233-A, which established the New Hampshire Boat Access Program. The legislation also provides a non-lapsing dedicated fund for public access development taken from a \$5 surcharge on boat registrations. The law allowed the NH Fish and Game Department to use the funding for the acquisition of lands for access, development of access facilities, and staffing. Another recommendation of the Public Access Plan, also an important aspect of RSA 233-A, is the establishment of a Public Water Access Advisory Board (PWAAB). The Board is comprised of 19 individuals representing State agencies, hunters, fishermen, lake and river associations, and various boating groups. This Board is charged with advising and monitoring all state agencies in their efforts to increase and expand access to New Hampshire's public waters.

Over 10 years have passed since the Public Access Plan was developed. Given the changes that occur over time, the priorities, recommendations and strategies set forth in this 1991 plan should be reviewed by the New Hampshire Fish and Game Department and the Public Water Access Advisory Board (PWAAB) to determine accomplishments to date, and reaffirm or revise priorities, goals and strategies for the next few years.

Trails Issues. The Office of State Planning, in cooperation with the Department of Resources and Economic Development, produced a *Comprehensive Statewide Trails Study* in 1997. This study served as an update to the 1974 Trails Study and was an outgrowth of the 1993-1999 SCORP. This study was completed with input and guidance from the Statewide Trails Advisory Committee. The New Hampshire Statewide Trails Advisory Committee, authorized under RSA 216-A, was established to advise DRED and the Commissioner on matters related to state trails. Membership includes a variety of interests from State agencies, motorized and non-motorized trail user groups, and non-profit organizations. This Committee helps improve coordination between agencies and recreational trail user groups and inform State decisions related to trails planning and development.

An important part of Comprehensive Statewide Trails Study planning effort included the development of statewide issues, goals, and recommendations related to trails. Issues identified related to several main categories including the protection of resources, user needs, compatibility of trail activities, trail maintenance, funding, laws, and municipal trails. Some main recommendations of this 1997 study included: encouraging the development of trail corridors to accommodate the needs of different trail users; encourage trail organizations and towns to work with land trusts to protect trail and greenway corridors; encourage links between places where people work, live and play; encourage towns and communities to develop trails within 15 minutes of home; and develop trail monitoring plans for evaluating trail maintenance needs on trail systems. These examples, along with others identified in the plan remain pertinent today and serve as an important foundation for addressing trail issues in the SCORP.

Issues related to trails are not always about competing *recreational* uses. For instance, many tracts of undeveloped land in New Hampshire are working forestlands. These lands provide forestry-related income to landowners, and many also offer public recreational opportunities. Active forestry on lands open to the public can sometimes impact recreational experiences. Trails may be closed for a period of time during active harvesting, or harvesting along existing trails can change the look and aesthetic appeal of an area. Issues can arise on publicly and privately held lands.

For example, in a town forest in southern New Hampshire, a municipality recently decided it was time to harvest timber and had a forest management plan developed. In the time since the town had acquired the parcel some ten years before, the town forest had been used primarily as a public recreation area for hiking, bird watching and cross-country skiing, etc. Trails were developed and marked for recreational use. When harvesting began, little explicit consideration was given to the existing recreational use of the property. The resulting cut had significant visual impacts on the property, especially as viewed from these public trails. This created conflict and disagreement in town over the purpose and management objectives of the land.

While no single prescription exists, some interested landowners are giving consideration to trail buffers as a way (management strategy) to help protect recreational corridors. Trail buffers might, for instance, limit or restrict forestry along existing trails or planned trails. Under such a scenario a landowner could, for example, agree to maintain a buffer of 50' or 100' along an existing recreational corridor, and limit forestry within this buffer zone to salvage cuts only. Such a tool helps protect existing the recreational opportunities (e.g. hiking, cross country skiing, etc.) by protecting the aesthetic appeal, while still maintaining a majority of a property's use as a working forest.

Motorized Access

Issues related to motorized access have become even more pronounced since the publication of the *Comprehensive Statewide Trails Study* five years ago. Use of wheeled off-highway recreation vehicles (OHRVs) is becoming an increasingly popular recreational activity in New Hampshire, as evidenced by the fact that wheeled off-highway recreation vehicle registrations in New Hampshire have more than doubled in the last seven years. A growing number of ATV clubs (20 or more) have formed across the state and New Hampshire now has a statewide association (Granite State ATV Association) championing rider issues and concerns.

While a relatively small proportion of people participate in wheeled OHRV activities as compared to non-motorized activities, it's increasing popularity and its relatively large impact on other use or interests demands increased attention from managers. Ignoring the growth of these recreational uses would only create greater management challenges and greater controversy in the future. Compounding this increase in resident interest is the growing trend towards restricting wheeled OHRV use in nearby states such as Massachusetts and Maine. Managers feel that wheeled OHRV policies in other states may be diverting additional use into New Hampshire.

A wide variety of opinions about wheeled OHRV management exist in New Hampshire. Some view existing trail and wheeled OHRV area access as insufficient given the growing demand and substantial registration fees paid by OHRV users. They feel that more state resources and wheeled OHRV fees should be directed to expanding and improving access for wheeled motorized access.

Others view wheeled OHRV use as a growing statewide problem and concern. Existing use is seen as detrimental to the environment (wetlands, wildlife, air pollution) and trail conditions, and negatively impacts other interests (other trail users, abutters). There is also growing concern over trespass, litter, safety, and problems with enforcement on privately and publicly held lands. There is concern that the State is paying too much attention to this use and will ultimately promote and expand OHRV use across the state.

Several communities, especially in the southern part of the state are expressing concern and frustration over growing OHRV use and their lack of control over this use. There is also a concern over the lack of State enforcement (NH Fish and Game) available to address trespass and safety issues, among others. This lack of State funding for enforcement is seen as placing a disproportionate burden on local law enforcement. There is a fear that growing recreational use and continued lack of local control will only exacerbate already problematic local issues in the future.

Legislation. Increased use and demand for motorized trail access heightens the need to better understand the needs of these users, the relationship of ATV/Trail Bike use to other uses, impacts on existing trails, other trail users, and the resource base. A new state law (House Bill 1273), passed in 2002, is beginning to address these issues more directly.

[House Bill 1273](#) (Chapter 233 of the Laws of 2002) provides legislative guidance for planning and procedures related to state-owned or leased trails for all-terrain vehicles (ATV) as well as off-highway recreational vehicles (OHRV) registrations. A key aspect of the new law includes a mandated ATV and Trail Bike Trails Plan. The plan is to be completed by the end of 2003 and updated every five years thereafter. The plan must emphasize self-contained trails and include the following components:

- a. Provide an inventory of the ATV and trail bike trails open to the public in the state, including the length and condition of the trails, persons or organizations responsible for maintenance, funding levels for maintenance, and estimated ATV and trail bike use.
- b. Provide an assessment of the amount of ATV and trail bike trail expansion required to reasonably accommodate the public need in the next five years.
- c. Propose additional sites of strategically located lands where public/private partnerships will allow development of ATV and trail bike trails.
- d. Propose sites for the acquisition by the state of strategically located lands for the development of ATV and trail bike trails.

- e. Assess the level of funding necessary for grants-in-aid and purchases of land, easements, and rights-of-way for the purposes of the 5-year plan, and make recommendations for fee structure changes to the legislature.

The Department of Resources and Economic Development is in the process of soliciting proposals for plan development.

Other Approaches. New Hampshire is not alone. Many states are grappling with wheeled OHRV management issues. Recognizing the increased growth of motorized use and the challenges surrounding this growth, the State of Minnesota recently constructed a designated OHRV area, reusing old iron mine lands. This project improves access for recreational users while minimizing environmental damage to public lands. The old mine area, along with good engineering and design, allowed managers to develop a recreation areas specifically designed to handle impacts of wheeled motorized use. This project, while priced at \$2.5 million, was entirely funded by user fees. Consideration should be given to exploring the feasibility or possibility of such a facility in New Hampshire.

CASE STUDY - MINNESOTA

The Iron Range Off-highway Vehicle Recreation Area, authorized in 1996, is located on former mine lands in northern Minnesota. This user-funded \$2.5 million facility will be operated year-round by DNR Trails and Waterways as a designated State Recreation Area. It features over 30 miles of recreational trails, scramble and competitive event areas that are specially designed for off-road motorcycles, all-terrain vehicles, and 4-wheel drive jeeps and trucks. A classroom building and two moto-cross training tracks will also be constructed for practice riding and instruction, and for use in hosting special events throughout the summer riding season. (Source: News Release, Minnesota DNR, 2002)

Fee and Non-Fee Activities

This discussion about the State's management of OHRV use brings to light a larger issue; that of how to manage for recreational activities with user fees versus those without user fees. Some feel that the State's attention and focus on these two broad classes of activities is out of balance, though there are perspectives on both sides of the issue. There is one general perspective that the silent majority (e.g. wildlife watchers, hikers, bicyclists, non-motorized boaters, etc) has too small of a voice in resource management decisions. The feeling is that more attention should be placed on preserving the more popular non-fee activities instead of the less popular fee-based activities (OHRV, motor boating, etc.).

Some feel the State focuses attention on supplying opportunities for fee-based activities but does not fully recognize the negative impacts these activities can have on other uses. Some feel the State is even promoting fee-based use because it is a revenue source. The

concern is that continued promotion of certain fee-based activities could ultimately damage the majority's ability to enjoy these other more popular (non-fee) activities.

There is another broad perspective, however, that recreationists who pay fees to participate in their activities should be given more State time and attention. Their fees should be used expressly to enhance and improve their ability to participate in these activities and state resource managers must be responsive to their needs. Some feel there still is not enough consideration given, based on the high fee rates charged, rather than too much consideration. Perspectives vary and discussions and debate about State management of fee and non-fee activities will likely increase in the future as recreation pressures and demand grow.

Local Open Space and Trail Planning

Many communities already identify, inventory, and plan for recreation needs, such as ball fields, playgrounds and bicycle paths, through their master planning process. In addition to this important planning effort, communities may also want to consider conducting an open space trails plan to identify and plan for open space (and trails) more explicitly. A recent manual, produced by the Central New Hampshire Regional Planning Commission (CNHRPC) is available to provide guidance.

The *Guide to the Development of a Municipal Open Space Trail System Plan* helps communities plan for a municipal trail system and to promote the conservation of lands of special significance. The guide provides recommendations for how to protect open space and create a trail system in a community. This is useful on a municipal level, and can also help neighboring communities develop a more regional approach to open space and trails development. Central New Hampshire Regional Planning Commission assisted seven communities in completing an open space trail plan between 1999 and 2001.

An open space trails plan consists of an inventory and maps of a town's existing conservation easements, public lands, rights-of-ways, and privately conserved lands, along with an inventory and maps of existing formal trails and informal trails. Examples include preserved private and public lands, lands that abut Class VI roads, snowmobile trails on private land, railroad corridors, and utility easements. Inventories and maps help a community decide upon new trails and provide a holistic view of the town's existing resources to aid the creation of an open space and trails network. The planning process is sensitive to issues of private property and landowner liability and attempts to minimize individual concerns over certain lands being identified in the plan.

Open Space Trail Plans can be adapted to meet the needs of individual communities and can be used alongside an existing Master Plan or adopted as part of a Master Plan. Such a plan can also provide recommendations for changes to a municipality's Site Plan Review Regulations or Subdivision Regulations. This guidebook is available on-line through the [Central NH Regional Planning Commission](#).

RECOMMENDATIONS

Providing Different, Sometimes Competing, Recreational Opportunities

GOAL: Insure that a variety of recreational opportunities are provided, even as pressures and potential conflicts may arise.

I. Objective: Protect existing outdoor recreation opportunities.

Strategies

- A. (LWCF) Focus efforts on renovating eroded or deteriorated facilities (e.g. boat ramps, playgrounds, etc.) and recreational areas (e.g. beaches, parks, trails, etc.).
- B. Protect existing access (e.g. water access, trails, trailheads, etc.) and preserve and maintain existing recreational areas (e.g. parks, playfields, etc.).
- C. Work with recreational clubs and organizations to produce and promote best management practices (BMPs) for different recreational uses (e.g. work with different trails groups to develop BMPs for trail development/maintenance).
- D. Encourage local stewardship of recreation areas/facilities.

II. Objective: Support additional recreational opportunities to address existing problems or deficiencies.

Strategies:

- A. (LWCF) Give priority to projects that provide for identified public recreational needs and/or unavailable recreational opportunities.
- B. (LWCF) Give priority to projects that identify and address existing problems with over use or mitigate conflicts of use.
- C. Encourage the State and local communities to determine recreational needs by focusing on desired levels of service.
- D. Educate communities about existing legislation that can promote and designate local recreational opportunities (e.g. Class A and B Trails and 20 percent recreational adjustment under Current Use).

III. Objective: Encourage keeping private lands open to the public.

Strategies

- A. Build coalitions between landowners and people who recreate on private lands (e.g. SPACE, NH Timberland Owners Association, State Agencies, trail groups, etc.).

- B. Continue to encourage private landowners to keep their lands open to recreational uses via Current Use and its 20 percent Recreational Adjustment.
- C. Encourage interested landowners to properly sign their property based on acceptable uses (e.g. encourage an organization to provide landowners with signs that post for specific uses. Often landowners can only find (therefore post) generic 'No Trespassing' signs though the intent is to only limit a particular use. Making use-specific signs more readily available will help keep lands from being posted against all public access. Also encourage participation in the NH Fish and Game sign program).

IV. Objective: Promote the use of education and information-based strategies to manage or avoid conflict.

Strategies

- A. Encourage shared use and cooperation among different recreationists by incorporating educational messages into maps, guides, and public information sources (e.g. NH Fish and Game Public Access Sites map, NH Horse Council brochure, "Share with Care" program, etc.).
- B. Support ongoing public education efforts focused on enforcement of existing recreation-related laws and penalties (e.g. continue mandatory education programs on boating laws, OHRV laws, hunting laws, etc.).
- C. Improve public access to recreational information, especially via the web, to increase awareness of available recreational opportunities statewide (e.g. examine the feasibility of placing OSP's Inventory of Outdoor Recreation Facilities or Public Water Access sites on the web).
- D. Develop a resource directory that provides information about who's responsible on a statewide level for different recreation programs and enforcement.

V. Objective: Insure that recreational opportunities are available to those with disabilities.

Strategies

- A. Involve persons with disabilities in the planning of new and/or the rehabilitation or modification of existing outdoor recreation facilities and programs (e.g. DOT, Governor's Commission on Disability, Granite State Independent Living, etc.).
- B. Develop a guidebook to outdoor recreation facilities that provides information for persons with disabilities about accessibility levels.
- C. Provide technical assistance and incentives to recreation providers to improve accessibility of recreational facilities and lands (e.g. US Fish and Wildlife Service enforcement of ADA accessibility, Governor's Commission on Disability).

D. Identify funding sources that can be used to improve accessibility and universal design (e.g. TEA-21, LWCF, etc.).

E. Work with partners to support and encourage universal design.

SELECTED CONTACTS & INFORMATION SOURCES

[DRED - Division of Parks and Recreation](#)

[DRED – Trails Bureau](#) – also provides links to many trail clubs

[Governor’s Commission on Disability](#)

[Granite State Independent Living](#)

[New Hampshire Department of Transportation – Bicycle/Pedestrian Program](#)

[New Hampshire Fish and Game Department](#)

[New Hampshire Recreation and Park Association](#)

[New Hampshire Office of State Planning](#)

[Regional Planning Commissions](#)

[White Mountain National Forest](#)

[Appalachian Mountain Club](#)

[US Department of Justice – ADA information](#)

APPLY LIMITED FINANCIAL AND HUMAN RESOURCES TO ADDRESS A RANGE OF RECREATION NEEDS

SUMMARY

Funding is needed to support a wide range of local and state recreational opportunities. These needs include facility rehabilitation, new facility development, land acquisition for both organized (e.g. ball fields) and unorganized recreational opportunities (e.g. open space for hiking, bird-watching), as well as efforts focused on protecting important natural and cultural resources.

- Funding is needed to support statewide open space and greenway planning efforts.
- Enforcement and stewardship costs are often not fully considered when lands are protected.
- Human resources (partnerships, volunteerism), not only financial capital, are fundamental to successful local recreational efforts.
- In a 2002 DRED survey, State Park Managers list major rehabilitation/facility construction as a more pressing funding need than new acquisition.
- Funding for natural and cultural resource protection is an important topic statewide and locally as underscored by the broad-based support for LCHIP, increased role of local/regional land trusts, and increased emphasis locally on land protection (open space bonds, local conservation funds).
- In the *Statewide Outdoor Recreation Needs Assessment* completed by the University of New Hampshire in 1997, respondents listed programs and initiatives aimed at land, water and species protection as higher overall funding priorities than those related to recreation development.
- In this same survey, funding for non-motorized recreation was listed as a higher priority statewide than funding for motorized recreation or recreation opportunities that require a high level of development.
- In a 1997 OSP survey, community recreation leaders rated ball fields most often as the number one facility needed in their community, followed by outdoor ice-skating rinks and bicycle trails. Ball fields also ranked #1 in the 1993 and 1987 versions of the survey.

OVERVIEW

High quality recreation requires an investment of both financial and social capital. Resources are needed for adequate planning, new acquisitions, ongoing maintenance, or facility refurbishment, as well as long-term stewardship and enforcement. All of these are legitimate needs and have merit. However, external grant funds are always limited and often target only certain needs or priorities. The challenge remains to find ways of creatively financing recreation in communities, and making use of a wide range of volunteer and non-financial resources that has the potential to be tapped.

FEDERAL, STATE, AND LOCAL FUNDING

A number of federal and statewide programs exist that provide funding and resources to assist in open space and recreation funding.

Federal

LWCF. The Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) Act of 1965 (Public Law 88-578, 78 Stat 897) was enacted “...to assist in preserving, developing, and assuring accessibility for all Americans” to outdoor recreation resources. The LWCF program provides matching grants to States, and through the States to local governments, for the acquisition and development of public outdoor recreation areas and facilities. At the federal level, the program is administered by the National Park Service of the Department of the Interior. At the state level, the LWCF is administered by the New Hampshire Department of Resources and Economic Development (DRED), [Office of Recreation Services](#). This program provides matching grant funding to state parks and communities.

The LWCF represents the major source of federal funding for outdoor recreation and land acquisition. Enacted by Congress in 1965, the Act contains two components: (1) it is the source of federal funding for additions of lands to the National Park System, National Forests, Wildlife Refuges, Trails, Wild and Scenic River systems, and public lands administered by the Bureau of Land Management; and (2) it is a source of federal grants to State and local governments for open space and recreation planning, land acquisition, and the development of outdoor recreation facilities.

TEA-21. The Transportation Equity Act for the Twenty First Century (TEA-21), signed into law in 1998, is a continuation of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA). Administered federally through the Federal Highway Administration, TEA-21 continues and improves upon programs of ISTEA and provides new initiatives aimed at both enhancing communities and the natural environment.

Several programs within TEA-21 provide funds focused on enhancing recreation opportunities and/or transportation alternatives. The [Transportation Enhancements](#) (TE) program, administered in New Hampshire by the Department of Transportation, provides funding to promote alternative transportation and more livable communities. Projects include a variety of initiatives including sidewalks, multi-use paths, bicycle lanes, acquisition of rail line, and the renovation and reuse of historic transportation buildings (depots, etc.)

Recent examples include a project in Lincoln where 2.5 miles of sidewalk and multi-use path were constructed along the Kancamagus Highway, a project in Nashua (Manchester Street) that connected sidewalks from schools to surrounding neighborhoods and improved safety for pedestrians of all ages, and the acquisition of 43.2 miles of the Cheshire Branch Railroad corridor in the towns of Fitzwilliam, Troy, Marlborough, Swanzey, Keene, Surrey, and Walpole.

The [Recreational Trails Program](#), administered in New Hampshire through the Bureau of Trails in the Department of Resources and Economic Development, provides funding for motorized, diversified, and non-motorized trails. Funding can focus on new construction, maintenance and restoration, fee acquisition, or easements for new trail corridors.

In order to receive funding, all states must establish a State recreational trails advisory committee that represents both motorized and non-motorized recreational trail users. Federal requirements mandate that states administer funds so that 30 percent are used for motorized use, 30 percent for non-motorized use, and 40 percent are used for diversified trail uses. The program provides 80 percent of the total project cost and soft match or in-kind match is allowed. New Hampshire received approximately \$535,000 in 2002. Trail grants range from a minimum of \$1,000 to a maximum of \$20,000.

The National Scenic Byways Program is coordinated in New Hampshire through the [Scenic and Cultural Byways Program](#) at the Office of State Planning. The New Hampshire Scenic and Cultural Byways Program was established in 1992 under RSA 238:19, "*... to provide the opportunity for residents and visitors to travel a system of byways which feature the scenic and cultural qualities of the state within the existing highway system, promote retention of rural and urban scenic byways, support the cultural, recreational and historic attributes along these byways and expose the unique elements of the state's beauty, culture and history.*"

New Hampshire has over 1000 miles of road designated as Scenic Byways, including the White Mountain Trail, a 100-mile National Scenic Byway. Designation to this national or statewide network makes a byway eligible for earmarked federal TEA-21 funds that provide funding to byways for projects such as upgrading bicycle or pedestrian facilities, protecting byway resources, or developing promotional material. Sample projects in New Hampshire include byway gateway centers in the Seacoast and in Lincoln, a corridor management and promotion project for the Connecticut River Byway, and the production of byway maps and brochures.

[Forest Legacy.](#) The Forest Legacy Program is administered through the USDA Forest Service in cooperation with State Foresters. The [DRED - Division of Forests and Lands](#) is the main contact in New Hampshire. The program protects important working forestlands threatened by conversion to non-forest uses by purchasing rights to restrict development of the land, or through outright purchase from willing sellers.

Forest Legacy funds have been leveraged with other funds and contributions to protect large tracts of working forest land in the state, including the 141,400 acre Connecticut Lakes Headwaters easement, and the 10,000 + acre Pond of Safety lands in Randolph. This program continues to play an important role in funding the protection of working forestlands and un-fragmented open space in New Hampshire.

[New Hampshire Coastal Program.](#) The New Hampshire Coastal Program is administered through the Office of State Planning. The program's stated mission is to "*balance the preservation of natural resources of the coast with the social and economic*

needs of this and succeeding generation.” Providing for public access to coastal lands and waters is listed as one of five major goals of the program.

Technical assistance grants are available to the Rockingham Planning Commission and the Strafford Regional Planning Commission to provide assistance to the 17 coastal communities in planning efforts such as master plan updates and local development ordinances. Competitive grants are also available to coastal communities for resource planning and management, education and outreach, and construction or property acquisition. One recent recreation-related example includes a \$100,000 grant to the city of Portsmouth. Monies will be used to stabilize a portion of the Pierce Island’s eroded northern shoreline and develop a pathway and three waterfront overlooks to improve recreational use.

New Hampshire Estuaries Project. The New Hampshire Estuaries Project, also administered through the Office of State Planning, is a joint local/state/federal program established under the Clean Water Act. The main goal is the protection and enhancement of estuarine resources identified to be of national significance by formulating and implementing a realistic management plan for the area. Grants are focused on implementing high priority aspects of the management plan, a number of which deal with open space and shore land protection efforts. These grants are available to municipalities, local community groups, environmental/watershed associations, non-profit organizations, schools and educational institutions, county conservation districts, and regional planning commissions within the coastal watershed.

State

Land and Community Heritage Investment Program (LCHIP). The stated intent of the program is to “*...conserve and preserve this state’s most important natural, cultural, and historical resources, through the acquisition of lands, and cultural and historical resources, or interests therein, of local, regional and statewide significance, in partnership with the state’s municipalities and the private sector, for the primary purposes of protecting and ensuring the perpetual contribution of these resources to the state’s economy, environment, and overall quality of life*”.

LCHIP was established in May, 2000 with the passage of Senate Bill 401 (now [RSA 227-M](#)). This competitive grants program provides a 50/50 match to communities and non-profit organizations for natural, cultural and historic resource protection. The Legislature appropriated \$12 million to the program for the 2002-2003 biennium. The level of funding is still uncertain for the 2004-2005 biennium. Project examples include a grant to the town of Merrimack to support the acquisition of 544 acres of open space, one of the last remaining open space areas in town, and a grant to the town of Boscawen to rehabilitate and restore the 1866 Penacook Academy. In the second grant ground, completed in March 2002, almost \$3.8 million in LCHIP funds were awarded. These grant monies helped to protect over 4000 acres of conservation lands and assist in the acquisition, restoration, or future study of 19 historic structures.

Moose Plate. The New Hampshire General Court, under [RSA 261:97-c](#), established the Conservation License Plate Program, also known as the Moose Plate Program, in 1998. The purpose of this volunteer program is to enhance existing conservation and preservation efforts via the sale of special license plates. Revenues are used by State agencies for the following purposes:

- Preserve or purchase significant publicly owned historic properties, archaeological sites, artifacts or articles.
- Research and manage non-game wildlife species as well as native plant species. Efforts also focus on public education of these species.
- Grants for county, municipal or non-profit conservation projects.
- Expand the roadside wildflower program.
- Assist in administering the Land and Community Heritage Program (LCHIP).

Beyond providing critical funding needed to administer LCHIP, a portion of the license plate receipts is used for a small grants program. The Conservation License Plate Grants Program utilizes a portion of the conservation license plate funds for local and regional conservation projects. Funds are available for resource conservation, education and outreach, and improvements to conservation areas. Applicants are pooled into one of two categories. The first category grants awards to communities, conservation related non-profits, and schools. The second grants awards to conservation districts and county extension offices.

In 2002, the State Conservation Committee through the Rockingham County Conservation District awarded its first allocation of funding from the conservation license plate program. In all about \$90,000 worth of grants were awarded in 2002. The Committee estimates approximately \$150,000 may be awarded this coming year. Eligible projects vary widely and reflect a broad range of conservation related initiatives. While some projects focus strictly on resource protection efforts, others relate to enhancing low impact recreation opportunities on conserved lands. Two specific projects funded this past year include developing a public water access and resource guide to a watershed in southeastern New Hampshire, and a trail/boardwalk design and construction project on school property. Grants tend to be small and focus on specific conservation projects that improve conservation land management or enhance conservation education rather than provide direct funding for land or easement purchases.

Grant-in-Aid Program. The Bureau of Trails, under the Department of Resources and Economic Development, administers a grant-in-aid program to provide assistance to organized, non-profit off highway recreational vehicle (OHRV) clubs and municipalities. The stated purpose of this program is to encourage development, maintenance, construction, grooming, and safety of OHRV trails in the State of New Hampshire. Monies may be used for the development and maintenance of OHRV trails on private, state, federal, and municipal lands. Grant-in-Aid funding for major trail construction and maintenance requires written landowner permission.

Local Financing

Parks, recreational facilities, and open space are important components of retaining community character, promoting health and wellness, and making a community livable. Communities have many tools available to help finance parks and open space, beyond external grant funds. The few discussed in more detail below are offered as options, or potential strategies, to be considered. Capital Reserve Funds, authorized under RSA 35, can be used to help communities to appropriate money for construction, reconstruction, or acquisition of capital improvements related to recreation or equipment. Recreation Revolving Loan Funds (RSA 35-B:2 II) allow communities to charge fees for recreation services and facilities, with all generated revenue then deposited into a special non-lapsing fund. The fund must be established by the municipality's legislative body, but can be expended by the recreation commission or other designated board without further approval. Not all tools will work or be supported in all communities.

Impact Fees. Impact fees, authorized under RSA 674:21,V, allow communities to assess fees on new developments and construction to help cover the costs associated with this new growth, including public recreational facilities. The fee must be directly proportional to the capital improvement needs related the new growth. Fees cannot be charged to correct existing deficiencies. Refer to the Office of State Planning's online reference library for additional information about [impact fees](#).

Open Space Bonds. Open space bonds are receiving increased attention among New Hampshire communities, particularly towards the south. In areas of fast growth, land protection efforts are often outpaced by development. When a tract of open space goes on the market the local conservation commission does not always have the resources or the time to purchase the land or an easement outright. This is compounded by the fact that many landowners, who might be willing sellers and interested in conservation, do not have the luxury of waiting until the next Town Meeting to see whether the town can purchase the property.

Open space bonds can help to bridge this time gap by providing substantial, and more readily available, funds for pressing land conservation efforts. In 2001, several towns passed open space bonds of more than a \$1 million. Hollis, with a 91 percent majority, passed a \$3.5 million bond. Newmarket passed a \$2 million bond for conservation and recreation. Stratham overwhelmingly passed a \$5 million bond for land conservation. The sums are impressive and mark a new chapter in local land conservation efforts. While land protection efforts have many goals in mind beyond recreation, traditional recreational activities (hiking, cross country skiing, hunting, fishing, etc.) are often preserved along with the land itself. Conservation of open space is central to many popular outdoor recreation pursuits.

Stratham, Our Town

In March 2002, the Town of Stratham in Rockingham County went to Town Meeting to ask for a \$5 million open space bond. Sprawl and development pressure were out-competing land protection efforts and significant resources were needed to protect existing open space. The idea started with the Conservation Commission and grew into a grass roots effort called “Stratham, Our Town”. The goal: to permanently protect 750 acres, or roughly one-third of Stratham’s remaining buildable land. With a \$5 million bond paid back over 15 years, the residential tax increase was estimated at around \$1 per \$1,000.

The grass roots effort, spearheaded by a volunteer committee, targeted voters directly by increasing awareness through newsletters, direct dialogue, and public forums. The Selectmen and Town Manager were behind the effort and provided input, guidance, and technical assistance to aid the process. The campaign worked. The Town voted overwhelmingly (88 percent) in favor of the bond and these funds are seen as a cornerstone for fulfilling the town’s open space and land preservation goals set forth in the Master Plan.

Land Use Change Tax – Conservation Fund. Under RSA 79-A communities can elect, by majority vote, to place a percentage or all of land use change tax monies into a conservation fund in accordance with RSA 36-A:III. Currently, about half of New Hampshire communities have tapped into this funding option. The land use change tax is applied when lands enrolled in Current Use opt out of the program. Some communities cap the percentage or total dollar value that can be added to the local conservation fund, others dedicate 100 percent of these local land use change penalties to conservation.

HUMAN RESOURCES

A great deal can be done with limited funds if in-kind human resources can be organized to make a project happen. Volunteer Friends of Recreation groups, for example, can be helpful to local recreation departments or commissions in fundraising efforts and in providing local recreation programs. These groups operate independent of town government and have more flexibility to initiate programs or special events and raise money for special recreation facilities or projects. These “friends of” groups are also important for State Parks. According to DRED’s 2002 State Park Managers survey, about 50 percent of State Parks have a Friends Group or other volunteers associated with the park, such as snowmobile clubs, boy scouts, and garden clubs that aid the park.

Volunteer action and public/private partnerships are central in making local and statewide conservation goals a reality. Local land protection efforts are often based upon partnerships between local land trusts, local residents, community groups, and elected officials alike. Beyond making good practical sense by building upon individual

strengths, these partnerships are often attractive to external funding agencies/entities (e.g. LCHIP, LWCF). Many grant programs look for local collaborative efforts and partnerships as a sign of community commitment. Partnership and broad based support increase the likelihood that a project will be successful over the long term, and will be money well spent.

This rings true for larger-scale statewide efforts as well. The Connecticut Lakes Headwaters project reflects an effort that involves the collaboration of State agencies, legislators, the Governor's office, local communities, and a variety of private non-profit organizations. This impressive project, when complete, will protect 171,500 acres of land in the northern reaches of the state. These lands protect habitat for 67 rare species, protect large tracts of working forest, and protect opportunities for outdoor recreation. The State will purchase an easement on 146,400 acres of land to be owned and managed by a timber company. The State will also purchase 25,000 acres of the most sensitive habitat to be set aside as a natural area. The Nature Conservancy will hold an easement on these lands. Finally, the remaining 100 acres will be added to the State-run Deer Mountain Campground to expand recreational facilities.

The success of this project rests on both public and private efforts. Substantial public funds have been secured through state and federal sources. However private fundraising is needed to complete the project. The Nature Conservancy, Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests, and the Trust for Public Lands are jointly spearheading this campaign. Private foundations, major donors, and supporters are all being tapped to complete this effort.

The growth and expansion of trail clubs supporting both motorized and non-motorized recreational activities underscores the growing interest in many trail-based activities. These groups are not only involved in voluntarily maintaining trails, but are also key partners in securing access and developing trails. There are over 100 snowmobile clubs in the state, growing numbers of ATV clubs, outdoor clubs, statewide and regional bicycling organizations, equine clubs, rail-trail groups, and hiking trail organizations, among others. Efforts should continue to coordinate volunteerism within these groups and expand public/private partnerships.

Friends of the Northern Rail Trail

Volunteer groups often make up the difference between a good idea and a success story. In 1996, the State acquired 60 miles of the old Boston & Maine Railroad Northern Line for recreation purposes. But acquiring the corridor proved to be just the beginning. The old rail line needed a great deal of work before it could be transformed into a year-round rail trail. The State had funds available to assist in such efforts but lacked the staffing or resources to undertake the necessary trail directly. That is where the [Friends of the Northern Rail Trail](#) in Grafton County (FNRT) stepped in.

Using state recreational trail grant monies, private fundraising and foundation grants, FNRT paired these funds with a great deal of volunteer time and effort to start the corridor's transformation into a recreation trail. So far, through an impressive volunteer effort, a 23 mile section of trail starting in Lebanon is open to foot traffic, bicycling, skiing, horseback riding, and snowmobiling. Volunteers removed rail ties, decked bridges, re-graded existing surface, and in some cases resurfaced sections of the trail to make it accessible to year round use. The group has also prepared a Rail Trail brochure for distribution and will continue to work on the remaining sections of trail down to Boscawen. Without such a coordinated volunteer effort, the Northern Rail Trail would still be in its infancy.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Apply Limited Financial And Human Resources To Address A Range Of Recreation Needs

GOAL: Wisely use financial and human resources (e.g. volunteers, partnerships, youth programs, etc.) to meet a wide range of recreational needs.

- I. Objective:** Prioritize renovation/refurbishment funding of State Park facilities over new land acquisition.

Strategies

- A. **(LWCF)** Give priority to projects that have been identified in a State Park master plan or through other planning efforts.
- B. **(LWCF)** Encourage renovations that use Universal Design, environmentally friendly designs, reduce long-term expenses, or cost less to maintain (e.g. native vegetation, energy efficient materials, etc.).
- C. Continue to estimate the existing backlog of projects at a statewide level through a software program called Fixed Asset Resource Maintenance System (FARMS).
- D. Educate the public on present funding mechanisms of State Parks (e.g. provide information about status of self-funding of parks on DRED website).

- II. Objective:** Continue to provide renovation/refurbishment funding to improve local land and water based recreational facilities/areas.

Strategies

- A. **(LWCF)** Give priority to projects that have an operations and maintenance plan and have shown sound stewardship on existing facilities.
- B. **(LWCF)** Give priority to projects that use Universal Design, environmentally friendly designs, reduce long-term expenses, or cost less to maintain (e.g. native vegetation, energy efficient materials, etc.).

III. Objective: Continue to provide acquisition funding to support new local land and water based recreational lands/facilities.

Strategies

- A. **(LWCF)** Give priority to projects that have been specifically identified in local or regional plans.
- B. **(LWCF)** Continue to give priority to communities that have had less benefit from LWCF funding in the past.
- C. **(LWCF)** Give priority to projects that use Universal Design, environmentally friendly designs, reduce long-term expenses, or cost less to maintain (e.g. native vegetation, energy efficient materials, etc.).
- D. **(LWCF)** Give priority to projects that consider stewardship costs in new projects and initiatives.
- E. **(LWCF)** Consider methods of giving priority to projects with a higher level of use, even in low population areas (e.g. OSP will consider possible methods and provide suggestions to DRED and the OPSP Advisory Panel for review).

IV. Objective: Encourage leaders to support financing of local, regional, and statewide plans for open space, recreation trails, and greenways.

Strategies

- A. Educate the public about the benefits of open space, recreation trails, and greenways (e.g. Dollars and Sense of Open Space, economic impacts of trails in communities, etc).
- B. Investigate expanding efforts of the Regional Environmental Planning Program (REPP) through the Regional Planning Commissions.
- C. Encourage public/private financing of these efforts.

V. Objective: Promote the importance of collaboration and volunteerism in developing and maintaining local recreation projects.

Strategies

- A. **(LWCF)** Give priority to projects that show local partnerships and commitment to not only developing but also maintaining land and water-based recreational facilities.
- B. Promote volunteerism with school-aged youth in communities (e.g. boys and girls clubs, Americorps, scouts, etc.).

VI. Objective: Explore the possibility of implementing voluntary, dedicated user fees for other recreational uses.

Strategies

- A. Educate the public and recreational users about possible benefits of user fee programs and about how money generated from fee programs would be used (e.g. proper fund management would mean that money would go towards supporting the specific recreational use.).

SELECTED CONTACTS & INFORMATION SOURCES

[DRED - Division of Parks and Recreation](#)

[DRED - Division of Forests and Lands](#)

[New Hampshire Fish and Game Department](#)

[New Hampshire Association of Conservation Commissions](#)

[New Hampshire Department of Transportation – TE Program](#)

[New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services](#)

[New Hampshire Office of State Planning](#)

[New Hampshire Charitable Foundation](#)

[Volunteer NH](#)

[Appalachian Mountain Club](#)

EDUCATION OF RECREATIONAL USERS, MUNICIPALITIES AND LANDOWNERS ABOUT RESPONSIBLE BEHAVIOR, LAWS, AND LIABILITY

SUMMARY

- Private landowners fear liability when opening up lands to recreational use.
- Communities do not fully understand their liability or rights in providing recreational opportunities.
- Users are not fully aware of their impacts on the environment or on other users.
- Users and providers do not always fully understand existing laws.
- Education should be an important part of early efforts to manage conflict and concerns about overuse/crowding.
- Forty four percent of respondents in the 1997 *Statewide Outdoor Recreation Needs Assessment* completed by the University of New Hampshire said that enforcement of environmental laws should be a high funding priority in the state.

OVERVIEW

Outdoor recreation management brings with it a range of education and information needs. Some information needs are focused on educating the recreational user, while others are aimed at the recreation provider. As participation across a widening set of activities continues to rise, recreation-related education and information will become an increasingly important tool.

Information and education can target many different needs. Some programs provide more information about what recreational opportunities are available across different parts of the state. Other campaigns are focused on building existing skills or teaching new skills. Other efforts aim to better inform landowners about current laws and their liability in allowing public access. Still others could inform municipalities about their rights and responsibilities regarding public recreational use.

Some initiatives are geared towards educating recreationists about outdoor ethics and responsible behavior. Some are voluntary, others mandated by law. This type of education becomes especially important as recreational use and pressure increase. Pressure on the existing resource-base can potentially result in more user conflict as more people compete for the same recreational resources. Education can help to stave off potential conflicts and mitigate existing problems as they arise.

Resource managers are faced with the simultaneous tasks of maintaining user safety, protecting natural resources, and providing high-quality experiences. Heightened public use, as well as expansion of types of use, can present many challenges, especially along trails. This can be especially prevalent in areas that appeal to a broad range of motorized and non-motorized uses. Often problems arise when participation in one activity distracts from another's ability to participate in, or enjoy, another activity.

Examples might include crowding or perceived overuse among hikers on a hiking trail, or problems with motorized and non-motorized boats using the same lake and access area. Of course determining when something becomes a problem can be subjective. Not everyone holds the same standard for determining when an area is 'too' crowded or when they feel there are too many 'incompatible' uses in an area. There are often no singularly right or wrong perspectives. Recreational providers must balance different perspectives with the more essential need to maintain safety, maintain quality recreational experiences, and protect the resources upon which these activities depend.

A 1994 report from the Federal Highway Administration, *Conflicts of Multiple Use Trails*, examined the known research and state of practice on managing multiple use trails. This report provides rules of practice for providing multiple-use trail opportunities as well as suggestions for minimizing conflicts. When exploring options for managing conflicts, the rule of thumb is to start small. Signage, peer pressure and education are all preferable to automatically placing limits on use or erecting barriers.

NEW HAMPSHIRE CONDITIONS AND TRENDS

Recreation-based education and information programs are sponsored by public agencies and private organizations alike. Many programs are undertaken through partnerships that build off the strengths of different entities (e.g. snowmobile clubs and Fish and Game Department). State law mandates participation in a number of recreation-based education programs. These include boater education, hunting education, and youth OHRV education.

Boater Education

As of January 1, 2002, the State of New Hampshire requires that anyone 16 years old or older have a valid safe boating certificate before they operate a power boat on public waters with an engine in excess of 25 horsepower. There is a sliding scale for compliance until 2008 and is based on year of birth. For instance, those born between 1977 and 1987 must comply by 2003. Those born before 1957 must comply by 2008. The boating safety course is a once in a lifetime requirement and, once certified, there is no legal requirement to take the course again. Courses are available through the NH Department of Safety, US Power Squadrons, and US Coast Guard Auxiliary. Courses are also available in all 50 states, [online](#), and as a home study.

Hunting Education

Mandatory hunter education classes are taught through the New Hampshire Fish and Game Department. State law requires that the first time a person plans to buy a basic hunting license, archery hunting license, or trapping license they must first complete the respective hunter, bow-hunter, or trapper education course.

The most widely offered program, Fish and Game's Basic Hunter Education Course, is taught by trained, certified volunteer instructors and the local conservation officer. The

course contains both classroom instruction and field experiences. Topics include safety, hunter ethics and responsibility, outdoor safety and survival skills, along with New Hampshire hunting laws and regulations.

OHRV Education

Off-highway motorized vehicle safety classes are required for children under the age of 16. OHRV Safety Education Classes have proven useful in minimizing accidents and problems on the trail, even as the sport increases in popularity. Accident rates for youth have remained stable in the last seven years even while the numbers of youth registrations have increased. As a comparison, accident numbers among older users (e.g. 20-29 year olds and 30-39 year olds) increase with registration numbers. A New Hampshire Fish and Game official reported that about 1000 children completed OHRV Safety Education Courses in the mid 1990's, as compared to about 2,200 in 2001.

Resident snowmobile registrations have remained relatively stable, showing only a slight increase over the last seven years. Non-resident snowmobile registrations have shown steady increase, up from 8,824 in 1995/96 to 18,363 in 2001/2002. Wheeled vehicle registration has showed substantial increase since the mid 1990's. In 1995/96 there were 10,556 in-state wheeled vehicle registrations. In 2001/2002 there were 20,973 registrations. Out-of-state registrations show a marked increase as well. New Hampshire reported 1,362 registrations in 1995/96 and 4,670 in 2001/2002. As the popularity of motorized recreation increases, so will the demand for trails and riding opportunities. This increased use will demand continued attention to enforcement and education efforts.

Partnerships

Public/private partnerships between State agencies and trail organizations remain crucial in promoting responsible use and managing impacts of use. One existing partnership is with the New Hampshire Snowmobile Association (NHSA) and its network of 115 clubs. Individual clubs work to develop positive relationships with private landowners by doing trail maintenance, policing trails, implementing "Carry Out, Carry In" trash policy, and posting trails on private lands as the landowner requests. The NHSA also works with the New Hampshire Fish and Game Department to conduct youth safety courses and champion "Zero Tolerance for Alcohol" policies.

As pressures on existing trails, recreational areas and lands increase, managers should also increase educational efforts that focus on responsible behavior and user ethics or etiquette. Recreationists and recreational groups are important partners in this effort. Some groups already undertake peer education efforts individually. The New Hampshire Horse Council, for instance, publishes a brochure aimed at educating fellow trail riders about safety, trail etiquette, and personal responsibility. Efforts should be expanded to encourage independent peer-education efforts as well as promoting public/private partnerships to promote responsible use.

Promotional efforts to educate the public about different recreational opportunities should be undertaken in conjunction with efforts to develop awareness of possible impacts of these uses. The New Hampshire Fish and Game Department, for example, publishes a

map and guide to public water access sites in New Hampshire. In addition to providing specific information about access sites, including level of accessibility, the map also provides information about existing environmental laws, safety laws, responsible use, water bodies that have known exotic species present, and tips for preventing further introduction of exotic species.

Public Water Access Signs. A new public education sign (Figure 13) is being posted at state-owned and other public water access sites around the state. This water access sign program is a collaborative effort of the New Hampshire Lakes Association, New Hampshire Rivers Council, and five state agencies (Departments of Safety, Environmental Services, Resources and Economic Development, Transportation and Fish and Game). The sign provides a positive spin on recreational use and a welcoming message, while supplying important information about responsible water recreation use and appropriate practices.



Figure 13. Public Water Access Sign Initiative

Benefits

New Hampshire has a strong tradition of giving private landowners incentives to keep their lands open and undeveloped. Public access to private lands is an important tradition in New Hampshire, and incremental losses of public access will change the face of recreation in the state. Efforts should be made to educate current and potential landowners about statewide incentives and economic benefits of not only keeping lands undeveloped, but also keeping lands open to certain types of outdoor recreation. The Current Use program and the recreation adjustment, in particular, should be highlighted.

The Current Use Taxation Program, under RSA 79-A, was established in 1972 to:

“...encourage the preservation of open space, thus providing a healthful and attractive outdoor environment for work and recreation, maintaining the character of the state’s landscape, and conserving the land, water, forest, agricultural and wildlife resources”.

Under this program, parcels of land (10 acre minimum) are taxed based on their current use value as open space (e.g. active farm or forest land) rather than on their potential value for development purposes.

Moreover, under New Hampshire's Current Use Program landowners can also accept an additional 20 percent "recreation adjustment" to their taxes. This recreation adjustment lowers a landowner's tax burden by an additional 20 percent if the land is kept open to the public for traditional forms of recreation. As defined by RSA 79-A, the six traditional forms of recreation consist of skiing, snowshoeing, fishing, hunting, hiking, and nature observation year-round unless these activities are detrimental to crops on agricultural lands or active forestry operations.

Liability

While it is important to educate landowners about the benefits of keeping lands open to the public, it is also important to educate landowners about their liability in allowing public use. Liability is of concern to both private landowners and municipal providers, and landowners are not always aware of their protections under state law. Moreover, information on this topic is not always easy to find.

In New Hampshire, private landowners have liability protection based on a number of State laws (RSA 215A:34, RSA 212:34, RSA 508:14). Namely, RSA 215A:34 states that landowners are not required to post their property against OHRV use. Therefore, if a parcel of land is not posted it does not mean that OHRVs are allowed. Riders must have landowner permission. RSA 212:34 or 'Duty of Care' states that landowners are not responsible for keeping their land safe for use by others who may use it for recreational purposes such as hunting, fishing, hiking or operating OHRVs. Finally, RSA 508:14 limits liability of landowners. This law states that landowners who do not charge for the recreational use of their property shall not be liable for unintentional personal injury or property damage. Beyond these legislative protections, the Department of Resources and Economic Development Bureau of Trails, through the use of OHRV fees, supports a landowner liability insurance policy for those landowners who sign OHRV trail agreements.

These protections are important and should be communicated widely in the state, given the substantial acreage privately held but open to the public for low impact uses. In 2001, about 39 percent of lands under Current Use claimed the additional 20 percent tax education by allowing traditional recreational uses. Over 50 percent of Current Use landowners said in a 2001 survey that they do not post their lands. Given the importance of privately held lands to recreation in this state, it is important that education programs continue to build knowledge and awareness of liability among landowners, and knowledge and awareness among recreationists.

Municipalities could also benefit from education efforts targeted towards increasing knowledge about liability and municipal rights related to public recreational uses. One area of growing concern relates to community rights related to regulating OHRV use. An

article published in *Town and Country* (June 2002, pg. 26) by the New Hampshire Municipal Association summarizes several key legislative points.

For instance, communities can regulate the use of OHRVs on town-owned property under RSA 41:11-a. This statute allows the selectmen to manage or regulate the use of town-owned property, including recreational or conservation lands and can, therefore, decide upon allowed or restricted uses on these lands. Another statute, RSA 215-A:6, prohibits OHRV operation on any portion of the right-of-way on public roads, including traveled sections of maintained roads unless specifically permitted. RSA 215-A:15 allows municipalities to regulate OHRV use via local ordinances as long as they are in line with all provisions of RSA 215A. This information is provided only as a general reference point. Refer to the statutes themselves for specific guidance.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Education of Recreational Users, Municipalities and Landowners about Responsible Behavior, Laws, and Liability

GOAL: Improve and increase educational opportunities and outreach targeted to both recreation providers and recreational users.

- I. Objective:** Educate landowners about the benefits of leaving lands open to the public and the liability protections provided by existing laws

Strategies

- A. Produce and promote a standard statewide brochure about landowner rights and liability protection that would be made available through multiple agencies and organizations (e.g. involve Attorney General's office, State agencies, non-profit organizations).
- B. Target messages to a diverse audience (e.g. realtors, outdoor recreation clubs, condo associations, etc.).
- C. Hold a statewide symposium to promote benefits of keeping private lands open to the public and build awareness of existing liability protections.
- D. Evaluate the feasibility of developing a statewide GIS map and database of lands under Current Use, including those that receive the 20 percent recreation adjustment.

- II. Objective:** Educate municipalities on liability issues and municipal rights related to recreational use.

Strategies

- A. Work with the municipal insurance providers to develop a municipal workshop explaining legal rights related to recreational use and municipal liability (e.g. municipal law lecture series, NHACC annual meeting).
- B. OSP should update the local guide to recreation financing and include legislative information about liability and recreational use.

- III. Objective:** Expand education programs aimed at recreationists targeting responsible behavior, environmental ethics, and knowledge of existing laws and penalties.

Strategies

- A. Establish a statewide clearinghouse of recreation-based education information and utilize a variety of media and methods to disseminate information (e.g. TV, radio, point of sale, brochures, water access sites, trail-head information, etc).

- B. Encourage local recreation and conservation groups to play a leadership role in presenting education programs (e.g. lakes associations, trail groups, land trusts).
- C. Increase use of existing campaigns/programs such as *Tread Lightly*, *Leave No Trace*, *Carry In/Carry Out* (e.g. target retailers as well as recreation and conservation groups).
- D. Incorporate responsible use messages into school and youth programs (e.g. involve service organizations, such as Rotary and Lions Clubs, to help deliver messages to boy/girl scouts and other youth groups).
- E. Build capacity of outdoor recreational organizations to provide peer education.

IV. Objective: Promote education-based strategies to minimize enforcement and use restrictions

Strategies

- A. Address user conflicts and safety issues through education and outreach efforts focused on responsible use (e.g. New Hampshire Snowmobile Association, AMC, White Mountain National Forest, etc.).
- B. Involve stakeholders in discussions about use concerns and potential conflicts early on in the process.
- C. Encourage outdoor recreation and conservation organizations to conduct monitoring, volunteer patrols, trail watches (e.g. lakes associations, OHRV clubs, Upper Valley Trails Alliance, etc.).

SELECTED CONTACTS & INFORMATION SOURCES

[Appalachian Mountain Club](#)

[DRED – Trails Bureau](#) – also provides links to many trail clubs

[New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services](#)

[New Hampshire Fish and Game Department](#)

[New Hampshire Department of Safety](#)

[New Hampshire Office of State Planning](#)

[Volunteer NH](#)

[New Hampshire Charitable Foundation](#)

[New Hampshire Lakes Association](#)

[New Hampshire Municipal Association](#)

IMPACTS OF EXISTING LAND USE PATTERNS ON RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

SUMMARY

- Sprawl promotes automobile use and decreases the amount of available open space in communities.
- Our existing car-based society negatively impacts efforts to promote close to home or neighborhood recreation opportunities.
- Current land use development patterns negatively impact local and regional opportunities for trails and recreation corridors.
- Respondents in the *Statewide Outdoor Recreation Needs Assessment* (UNH, 1997) said that about 50 percent of their outdoor recreational activity takes place within 10 miles of home.
- Seventy-one (71) percent of respondents in this same 1997 statewide survey agreed or strongly agreed that continued commercial development represents a serious threat to New Hampshire's natural and cultural resources.
- Development is consuming more and more undeveloped land, as defined by acres per person, as population increases (OSP, 2000).
- Recreation corridors can also serve as alternative transportation corridors.
- Nationwide Smart Growth initiatives and a new OSP report called *Achieving Smart Growth in New Hampshire* provide principles and tools aimed at improving how our communities develop and grow "smarter".
- An important part of growing smarter includes preserving open space and parks, creating networks of trails and greenways that link community resources, and promoting bicycle/pedestrian friendly communities. All of these goals have a positive effect on local recreational opportunities and have solid links to transportation, health and land use planning goals.

OVERVIEW

State governments and communities across the country recognize potential pitfalls of unmanaged growth and are searching for strategies to grow "smarter". Sprawl and unmanaged growth conger up images of sprawling suburban development, loss of open space, and the deterioration of community character. While there is no concise, single definition of sprawl, The Office of State Planning's *Report to Governor Shaheen on Sprawl* (1999) discusses sprawl as representing patterns of development when more and more land is consumed for various human activities, when the places where we conduct activities are farther apart and homogeneous rather than mixed use groupings, and when we rely on automobiles to connect us to those places. ("Sprawl Report", pg. 4).

In relation to recreation, increased dependence on the automobile and loss of open space negatively impact both the quantity and quality of local outdoor recreation opportunities. Under this type of scenario, walking or biking to a local park or store is replaced by

driving to a park, school, or office on the outskirts of town. Where once stood a large tract of un-fragmented forestland available for hiking and cross-country skiing now stands a new subdivision or shopping plaza. Parks, open space, trails and greenways are important community resources, and an important part of making a community livable.

A wide range of federal and state agencies and organizations, including the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA), support concepts of “smart growth”. While not every organization shares a single definition, there are many common threads. Some over-riding themes include encouraging a mix of land uses, protecting the environment and open space, community involvement in development decisions, providing a variety of transportation options, and fostering distinctive communities.

Ultimately, smart growth efforts offer choices that can help communities grow and develop wisely. Not every tool will fit every community, and there is no single solution for growing smarter. Likewise, there is no single set of standards or sole prescription that will improve outdoor recreation in local communities. Communities must consider local needs and community character when making land use, transportation and recreation-related decisions.

NEW HAMPSHIRE CONDITIONS AND TRENDS

There are several smart growth efforts underway, specifically in New Hampshire, which add increased meaning to these concepts. The Office of State Planning recently conducted a 2000 study entitled *Managing Growth in New Hampshire: Changes and Challenges*. This study found that the population of the state increased by an estimated 60 percent from 1970 to 1998, and, during this same time period, the number of housing units increased by nearly 95 percent. The study not only explored the amount of growth in the state but, through case studies, also explored the physical pattern of this growth. In each of the 10 communities examined, the increase in developed land exceeded the population increase. So while these 10 municipalities on average saw a 71 percent increase in population, they saw a 137 percent increase in developed land. This pattern means that recent increases in population are expressed on the ground by even larger increases in developed land. Development is becoming more spread out (less infill development) and more open space is being consumed in the process.

New Hampshire is clearly a desirable place to live and people from all walks of life can enjoy a high quality of life within its borders. This “quality of life” has strong roots in New Hampshire’s abundance of natural, historic and cultural resources, and to some degree, in the ability to access and appreciate these resources. Working forests and agricultural lands, clean rivers and lakes, traditional town greens and historic buildings all help define the state’s character. Conserving these resources is vital to our economy, health, and well-being.

Beyond defining the state and community character, these resources provide opportunities for a range of outdoor recreational pursuits. Loss of un-fragmented open space and sprawl diminish both the quality and quantity of outdoor recreational

opportunities. This, paired with a growing population base, growing tourism market, and increase in outdoor recreation participation make discussions about outdoor recreation and its connection with land use planning and smart growth initiatives that much more important.

Current Initiatives

On a policy level, State decision makers recently passed legislation that focuses State, regional and local efforts on promoting sound development patterns. House Bill 712 (Chapter 229, Laws of 2002) aims to coordinate state and local land use planning efforts by improving consistency among master plans developed on a state, regional and community level. The Office of State Planning and the Regional Planning Commissions are charged with developing goals consistent with principles of smart growth and providing guidance and assistance to communities as they develop/revise local master plans.

As part of its charge, the Office of State Planning is instructed to assist the Governor in the creation of a comprehensive State Development Plan. In the past, the State Development Plan was limited to serving as an economic policy statement, but these statutory changes considerably broaden the scope of the Plan, making its content similar to that of a local master plan. The State Development Plan is supposed to reflect the “desires of the public relative to the future,” and its overarching goal is to provide cohesion among the plans and programs of state agencies, and to provide the ability to coordinate state agencies’ action and projects.

Recreation is specifically identified as one of the main topic areas for the plan. Recreation will be considered alongside other broad topics such as transportation, land use, economic development, and natural resources. Together, these topic areas set the foundation to provide comprehensive and integrated strategies for creating a vision and directing future development in the state.

The Office of State Planning is also developing a toolkit entitled *Achieving Smart Growth in New Hampshire*, which provides a host of local examples and success stories. This toolkit’s foundation is based on eight principles, “Principles of Smart Growth for New Hampshire”, that reflect the State’s definition of smart growth, as enacted by the Legislature in RSA 9-B. These principles have a strong basis in nationwide smart growth principles, but target New Hampshire’s individual character.

- **Maintain traditional compact settlement patterns** to efficiently use land, resources and infrastructure investments.
- **Foster the traditional character of New Hampshire downtowns, villages, and neighborhoods** by encouraging a human scale of development that is comfortable for pedestrians and conducive to community life.
- **Incorporate a mix of uses** to provide variety of housing, employment, shopping, services and social opportunities for all members of the community.

- **Preserve New Hampshire's working landscape** by sustaining farm and forest land and other rural resource lands to maintain contiguous tracts of open land and to minimize land use conflicts.
- **Provide choices and safety in transportation** to create livable, walkable communities that increase accessibility for people of all ages, whether on foot, bicycle, or in motor vehicles.
- **Protect environmental quality** by minimizing impacts from human activities and planning for and maintaining natural areas that contribute to the health and quality of life of communities and people in New Hampshire.
- **Involve the community** in planning and implementation to ensure that development retains and enhances the sense of place, traditions, goals, and values of the local community.
- **Manage growth locally in the New Hampshire tradition, but work with neighboring towns** to achieve common goals and more effectively address common problems.

These principles reflect the strong links between recreation and other planning efforts related to land use, transportation, and health. Take for example the fifth principle, aimed at providing choices and safety in transportation to create livable, walkable communities. This one principle simultaneously works towards fulfilling recreational goals, land use goals, transportation goals, and health goals.

If a community strives to improve its transportation options and expand alternative transportation, it will improve the ability of people to move about the community using multiple modes of transportation. Improving sidewalks, trails, and bike paths and creating trail linkages between important community focal points (i.e. schools, the local library, businesses, residences, and community green spaces) helps refocus the community towards the village or downtown area. This planning effort simultaneously improves recreational opportunities close to home for human powered activities such as walking, bicycling, running, etc. As more people bike or walk around town instead of driving, they spend less time in their car, and more time exercising out in their community. This increase in activity, in turn, fulfills a health and wellness goal of increasing exercise and promoting a healthier lifestyle.

The interconnectedness of these broad principles underscores the need for collaboration of recreation planners/providers with local land use, transportation, and health officials at a state, regional and local level. While much of this may seem simple and almost self-evident in concept, the challenge lies in establishing policies and programs that can have on the ground impacts.

One opportunity for collaboration is with the updated Department of Transportation's (DOT) Statewide Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan. This updated plan, produced in 2000, provides a list of objectives aimed at meeting the goal of supporting and encouraging bicycling and walking as alternatives to motorized forms of transportation and as an element of the state's inter-modal transportation system. Several objectives stated in DOT's plan could also meet statewide recreation-related goals.

Below are some examples:

- DOT will promote bicycling and walking as viable modes of transportation.
- DOT will cooperate with other state agencies in initiating, developing, and implementing programs that encourage bicycling and walking.
- DOT, in cooperation with the Department of Resources and Economic Development (DRED), will propose a statewide plan for the integration of recreational trails with other bicycle/pedestrian facilities, set standards for their development, and encourage and support their improvement to all season condition.

These "alternative transportation" goals and proposed initiatives also serve to improve recreation corridors in the state, including bicycle and pedestrian opportunities for recreational use as well as for transportation. Recognizing and building on the linkages between 'transportation' planning efforts and recreation planning efforts will strengthen both.

Route 2 Corridor Study

The Route 2 Corridor Study undertaken by the Department of Transportation in conjunction with OSP, North Country Council, and others, focused planning efforts on understanding the relationship between land use and transportation within this 35-mile corridor, covering five communities (Lancaster, Jefferson, Randolph, Gorham, Shelburne). The goal was to develop a regional plan that would help to preserve the capacity and improve safety along this important east-west route. Recommendations centered on land use, transportation, access management and bicycle and pedestrian facilities. Examples of recommendations that tie directly to recreation include improving on-road bicycle facilities for long-distance cyclists, developing off-road bicycle and pedestrian facilities for families and as a way to link destinations, improving trailhead parking and access and parking and trails near Reflection Pond.

Historic and Cultural Resources. Historic and cultural resource protection and preservation is an important component of preserving the traditional character of the state. The recently established Land and Community Heritage Investment Program (LCHIP) and its explicit focus on historic and cultural resource protection underscores this.

New Hampshire has a wealth of historic and cultural resources that help define our state. Covered bridges, stonewalls, historic buildings, old barns, and quintessential New England villages are part of New Hampshire's fabric. Our history and culture are also important tourist attractions and enhance some of the most popular outdoor recreation experiences including sightseeing and driving for pleasure.

Historic walks and tours are popular attractions and supported by a range of organizations. For instance, the National Park Service, in partnership with Shaker communities and museums and State Historic Preservation Offices along the East Coast, have established a regional [Shaker Historic Trail](#). This joint effort is aimed at promoting awareness of history and promoting tourism to historic places. New Hampshire's Enfield Shaker Village and Canterbury Shaker Village are part of this regional effort. In addition, the state Scenic and Cultural Byways Program promotes our wealth of culture and natural resources and offers scenic routes and destinations, whether one drives by car or bus, or travels by bicycle.

On a planning level, the Division of Historical Resources recently completed its *New Hampshire's Preservation Plan* in 2001. This plan emphasizes the need for public education and outreach to promote greater awareness and appreciation of the state's cultural resources, as well as planning and protection to better integrate preservation planning into larger decision-making on a state, regional and local level.

Other Initiatives. The eight principles discussed above are often advocated by organizations and businesses in New Hampshire, alongside government. A new initiative represents another opportunity for collaboration. The New Hampshire Smart Growth and Livable Communities working group, funded in part through the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation, aims to "build cross sector linkages and identify an agreed-upon agenda for action on Smart Growth issues in New Hampshire".

The group, made up of a range of organizations and interests including planning, tourism, New Hampshire's Main Street Program, energy, business and industry, public health, cultural/historical, transportation, conservation, to name a few, emphasizes the need to build partnerships, collaboration, and linkages among these groups and focus on a common agenda to help New Hampshire grow smarter in the future. This broad-based, public-private collaboration will include a yearlong forum to help define issues, identify leverage points and build agreement. The second phase, scheduled for late 2003 or early 2004, will then set an agenda for a smart growth action plan.

Local Examples

Communities in New Hampshire are already undertaking a number of initiatives, to help protect open space, enhance traditional community character, and improve transportation options. Many have direct links to recreation. The Office of State Planning is currently preparing a tool kit filled with examples and success stories.

Some communities have implemented open space or cluster developments as a way of both accommodating growth and protecting open space. In this zoning provision, plans

for new housing development start with protecting important open space and incorporating housing into smaller lot sizes. Crockett Farm in Stratham is one example. This open space or cluster project allows for smaller lot sizing, with open space surrounding the housing to provide habitat for wildlife and maintain natural areas for low impact recreational activities. In addition, areas of working forest land and open farm fields have been maintained through conservation easements.

Many communities are encouraging use and appreciation of their waterfront and downtown area by establishing trails and parks and linkages within central areas of town. This larger community improvement effort also improves recreational opportunities. In one example, the town of Littleton is working to enhance and link a series of riverfront pocket parks including one in front of the Littleton Area Senior Center and facing downtown. These sites provide open access to the river, including swimming in the summer months. Using DOT Transportation Enhancement funds, efforts are underway to develop a river walk and pedestrian bridge across the Ammonoosuc River to enhance connections to downtown.

In the city of Dover, a pedestrian/bicycle covered bridge connects downtown mill buildings with the soon to be redeveloped commercial district across the Cocheco River. This bridge also links with a nearby park to complete a walking loop. In downtown Plymouth, the NH Fish and Game Department has developed a boat access facility to provide river access for boating as well as riverfront access for pedestrians. This site is situated in the heart of the town near the Plymouth Area Senior Citizens Center and the Plymouth District Court. Boaters can also rent kayaks from a nearby shop and walk to the access site.

Planning for Outdoor Recreation

Local decisions that impact community outdoor recreation opportunities are made by a variety of different entities. While many communities have a recreation director or recreation commission in charge of community 'recreation', this entity (entities) is not solely responsible for providing or looking after all community-based recreational opportunities.

Community outdoor recreation can involve a range of local leaders and staff. Often a conservation commission is responsible for managing a town forest or town natural areas, both of which can provide outdoor recreation opportunities and a variety of trail uses. Together with the board of selectmen, a planning board may make decisions about Class VI roads, sidewalks, and recreation features of new developments. It is important to support efforts to improve communication between these decision-makers in both the town master planning process and in the management and discussions about municipal recreational resources.

In addition, improvements could be made on a statewide policy level to improve how recreation is defined or discussed under State law. One specific suggestion is to clarify and improve upon the reference to recreation in RSA 674:2, the state statute on local master planning. At this time communities are encouraged to develop a chapter on

recreation that "... shows existing recreation areas and addresses future recreation needs." There is a concern that this definition provides communities with little guidance for developing a high-quality recreation chapter within their local master plan, one that would truly consider the broad range of recreational features in a community. Given this concern, the Office of State Planning will take a lead role exploring and suggesting legislative changes to this statute.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Impacts Of Existing Land Use Patterns On Recreational Opportunities

GOAL: Promote growth and development patterns that encourage local recreational opportunities and preserves undeveloped lands for future recreational use.

- I. Objective:** Incorporate outdoor recreation more fully as an issue within larger discussions of ‘smart growth’.

Strategies:

- A. Develop statewide, regional, and local partnerships between recreation planning efforts and those related to land use, transportation, and health (e.g. NH Celebrates Wellness, DOT, OSP, DRED, DHR).
- B. Support reauthorization of a federal transportation bill that continues or expands upon TEA-21 in its support of bicycle and pedestrian facilities.
- C. Emphasize to communities the benefits of conducting natural resource inventories and developing conservation/open space plans as part of larger community planning efforts.
- D. Broaden enabling legislation for impact fees that would expand allowable uses to include open space and recreation infrastructure.
- E. Improve cross-links between the land use, open space, cultural and historic resources, transportation, and recreation chapters of local master plans (e.g. encourage communities to include a key at the end of each chapter explaining links with other chapters).
- F. Promote interagency coordination to address regional recreation, trail and open space needs (e.g. explore expanding the role of the Statewide Trails Advisory Committee in addressing regional trail needs).
- G. Encourage Regional Planning Commissions to coordinate and develop multi-community recreation and open space plans (e.g. Central New Hampshire Regional Planning Commission open space and trail planning assistance).
- H. Improve upon existing references to recreation in state statutes (e.g. OSP will work to revise reference to recreation in RSA 674:2).

II. Objective: Promote local development that is sensitive to protecting and enhancing local land and water-based recreation and natural and cultural resource protection opportunities.

Strategies:

- A. **(LWCF)** Give priority to projects that provide community linkages/improve connectivity (e.g. bicycle/pedestrian linkages between residences, boat access, recreational fields, schools, library, etc.).
- B. **(LWCF)** Give priority to land acquisition projects that protect resources most threatened by land use changes.
- C. Support efforts to create local and regional networks of trails and greenways (e.g. Winnepesaukee River Trail, Sunapee Ragged Kearsarge Greenway, etc).
- D. Support efforts that link community resources via trails and improve the overall connectivity of trails (Derry Pathways, etc.).
- E. Better incorporate open space and trails planning efforts into local and regional planning and land use decisions.
- F. Develop a joint education program targeted towards recreation departments, conservation commissions, and other appropriate boards focused on building awareness of the linkages between recreation and conservation.
- G. Promote “Walk to School” and other “Walk to” or “Ride to” programs.

III. Objective: Educate communities about the importance and economic/non-economic benefits of local, close to home recreational opportunities.

Strategies:

- A. Educate the public about the economic value of recreational opportunities in local communities (e.g. education and outreach efforts focused on promoting the values of trails, clean surface water, open space, and non-motorized travel within a community etc.).
- B. Identify and promote existing strategies that successfully integrate recreation resource protection and community economic development.

SELECTED CONTACTS & INFORMATION SOURCES

[New Hampshire Office of State Planning](#)

[New Hampshire Department of Transportation – Bicycle/Pedestrian Program](#)

[Regional Planning Commissions](#)

[New Hampshire Charitable Foundation](#)

[New Hampshire Main Street Program](#)

[Appalachian Mountain Club](#)

[New Hampshire Municipal Association](#)

[New Hampshire Minimum Impact Development Partnership](#)

[Smart Growth Network](#)

IMPORTANCE OF LOCAL OUTDOOR RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES AND OPEN SPACE PROTECTION IN PROMOTING INCREASED HEALTH AND WELLNESS

SUMMARY

- Obesity in kids/adults has been labeled as an epidemic in the US. Trends are similar in New Hampshire.
- Physical activity levels among adults and children in New Hampshire are below national recommendations.
- Providing open space, parks, trails, and greenways for “recreation” can be an important part of larger community efforts to develop more livable/walkable communities.
- Partnerships and links between health and recreation are being developed on the national level. The Center for Disease Control sponsors an initiative (Active Community Environments) to promote walking, bicycling and the development of accessible recreation facilities. One of the major initiatives consists of a new partnership among 11 federal programs in 4 different federal agencies (including the National Park Service and US Forest Service) to promote healthier lifestyles through recreation and physical activity.
- Providing outdoor recreation opportunities within neighborhoods and communities and providing better access to information about recreational opportunities have been identified as important tools to address obesity and lack of physical activity.
- Nationwide initiatives and partnerships are also in place to promote use of trails as ‘pathways to health’ and to promote community partnerships aimed at encouraging physical fitness. Promoting trails and trail use is seen as a way of reaching the largest segments of the community. Walking/trail activities are the most popular recreational pursuits in the US, even among those 60 + years of age.
- *Healthy New Hampshire 2010* provides a statewide agenda to improve health in New Hampshire. Increasing physical activity and lowering obesity/overweight is part of this effort.
- *Livable, Walkable Communities (LWC)* coordinated by New Hampshire Celebrates Wellness, is currently working to expand knowledge about and promote the important role community design and the built environment play in either promoting or impeding physical activity.

OVERVIEW

Recreation plays an important role in promoting individual wellness and supporting healthy communities. Lack of exercise and poor diet are two main factors contributing to obesity. The Department of Health and Human Services reports that, as of 1999, 61 percent of adults were overweight nationwide. Of particular concern is the fact that 14 percent of children and adolescents were overweight and this percentage has tripled since

1980. According to the Surgeon General, adult obesity rates have doubled since 1980. Less than 33 percent of adults engage in 30 minutes of moderate physical activity five or more times a week (federal recommendations) and 40 percent participate in no leisure-related physical activities.

A recent surgeon general report highlights a number of community-based strategies aimed at encouraging healthier lifestyles and promoting physical activity. Some are aimed specifically at promoting physical activity locally and make a strong case for partnering with recreation providers and planners. One identified strategy is to make community facilities available for physical activity for all people, including on the weekends. Another is to create more opportunities for physical activity at work sites. These broad recommendations are important from a health and wellness perspective and from a recreation perspective.

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation recently published a report entitled *Healthy Places, Healthy People; Promoting Public Health & Physical Activity through Community Design* (2001). This report stresses the importance of community design and the way our built environments are constructed in either promoting or impeding physical activity. Existing environments too often focus exclusively on the automobile and communities are losing open space and good access for walking or bicycling.

NATIONWIDE CONDITIONS

Healthy People 2010, a publication of the US Department of Health and Human Services, provides information about a range of different leading health indicators (LHI). Physical activity and obesity are both specifically identified in the report as LHIs. The report highlights that only 15 percent of adults performed the recommended amount of physical activity in 1997, and 40 percent of adults participated in no leisure-time physical activity. Outdoor recreation provides an important outlet for promoting physical activity.

The benefits of physical activity have long been known. Regular physical activity can control weight, improve psychological well-being, and reduce symptoms of depression and anxiety. A range of socio-demographic characteristics can influence activity levels. Research has shown that adults in northeastern and southern states tend to be less active than adults in western and north central states. Women tend to be less active than men, across all adult age groups, and adults with lower education and income tend to be less active than average. Reasons people cite for not increasing activity levels include both personal and environmental factors such as lack of time, lack of access to convenient facilities, and lack of a safe environment where they can engage in physical activity.

Programs and Partnerships

In response, the US Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control (CDC) is developing programs and partnerships to combat these trends. One such program is the CDC sponsored, Active Community Environments (ACEs). This initiative promotes walking, bicycling, as well as widely accessible recreational facilities. Two of ACE's main goals include encouraging bicycle and pedestrian friendly

environments and promoting self-powered forms of transportation (walking, bicycling). Community characteristics, such as housing density, road/street design, availability of public transportation, and availability of bicycle and pedestrian opportunities, among others, are important factors behind promoting or hindering physical activity locally.

An important ACE initiative consists of a new partnership among 11 federal programs in 4 different federal agencies (including the National Park Service and US Forest Service) to promote healthier lifestyles through recreation and physical activity. Providing outdoor recreation opportunities within neighborhoods and communities and providing better access to information about recreational opportunities were identified as important tools to address obesity and lack of physical activity.

Other nationwide initiatives and partnerships are also in place to promote use of trails as exercise and to support community partnerships aimed at encouraging physical fitness. The Department of the Interior, of which the National Park Service is a part, is promoting the use of trails as “Pathways to Health”. Promoting trails and trail use is seen as a way of reaching the largest segments of the community. Walking/trail activities are some of most popular recreational pursuits in the US, even among older segments of the population.

Public private partnerships are critical at a national level, and serve as a model for developing similar initiatives at a state or local level. The National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) has entered into a memorandum of understanding with the US Department of Health and Human Services to develop a strategic partnership that promotes physical activity. The purpose is to reach goals proposed in *Healthy People 2010* as they relate to physical activity, obesity and overweight. Goals include: increasing the level of physical activity among youth and adults; reducing levels of obesity among youth and adults; and reducing environmental barriers to physical activity at the community level, with special emphasis on removing barriers for the disabled. Selected strategies set forth include the following:

- Population and community-based health education and health promotion activities;
- Activities that utilize technology to increase awareness of the local access and opportunities for physical activity;
- Coordination of public awareness and media activities that include the Leading Health Indicators (LHIs) and that address the imperative of increasing physical activity, promoting healthy behaviors, and increasing quality and years of healthy living;
- Joint efforts to promote professional education and training, dissemination of best practices, and joint efforts to mobilize communities around the *Healthy People 2010* objectives and the Leading Health Indicators;
- Activities designed to reach the community level, including but not limited to encouraging partnerships locally;
- Activities that augment data collection efforts;
- Increased collegiality, recognition, support, and resource sharing; and

- Strategic leveraging of resources among organizations.

Safety. Safety at recreational areas is also part of promoting health and wellness. The US Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) has recently updated its *Handbook for Public Playground Safety*. The purpose is to help communities, schools, day care centers, corporations, and other groups build safe playgrounds. The publication provides information detailing technical safety guidelines for designing, constructing, operating, and maintaining public playgrounds. This guide is available on line at (<http://www.cpsc.gov/CPSCPUB/PUBS/325.pdf>).

NEW HAMPSHIRE CONDITIONS AND TRENDS

In New Hampshire the Department of Health and Human Services and the Healthy New Hampshire 2010 Leadership Council, recently produced *Healthy New Hampshire 2010*, the state's first disease prevention and health promotion agenda. One of the main focus areas identified in the plan deals with nutrition and physical activity.

The report states that 50 percent of New Hampshire adults are overweight or obese and 9 percent of 9th-12th graders are overweight. The goal is to reduce New Hampshire's adult overweight and obesity figures to 40 percent by 2010 and of 9th-12th graders to only 5 percent. Another main goal is to increase the levels of physical activity among adults and kids. The goal is to increase regular physical activity up to 50 percent for both adults and high school students. Figures now are around 24 percent for adults and 27 percent for 9th-12th graders.

New Hampshire Celebrates Wellness coordinates a statewide Livable, Walkable Communities (LWC) initiative. Main goals are to raise awareness about the importance of walking, bicycling, and non-motorized linkages in communities, and provide tools to help communities understand how the built environment can affect these opportunities. Non-motorized linkages are important for both community health and recreation and as well as for transportation. Promoting awareness is a first step in increasing informed public demand for more bicycle and pedestrian friendly communities. The LWC initiative is modeled of the Active Community Environments initiative discussed above.

Towns in New Hampshire are already focusing efforts on improving the pedestrian scale of their local built environment. Both grant funds and concerted local efforts can make substantial, on the ground changes to encourage bicycle and pedestrian use.

Derry Pathways

The Town of Derry has been working since 1993 to realize its goal of becoming a more bicycle and pedestrian friendly town, both to promote recreation and better health. An important first phase of this is now complete thanks to years' worth of volunteer efforts, town funds, and Transportation Enhancement grant monies. Linkages to recreational areas, stores, schools, and library form an important part of this loop effort. Through a mix of on-road and off-road pathways the loop circles several schools, a downtown golf course, medical centers, several ball fields, the downtown area with shopping, town offices and restaurants, as well as a playground and park. Maintenance is encouraged by voluntary Adopt-a-Spot campaigns, as well as through the town Public Works Department. The Pathways Committee continues work on efforts to expand the pathway.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Importance Of Local Outdoor Recreation Opportunities And Open Space Protection In Promoting Increased Health And Wellness

GOAL: Promote health/wellness benefits gained from improving recreational opportunities and bicycle and pedestrian linkages in communities.

I. Objective: Broaden and strengthen partnerships.

Strategies:

- A. Build connections with the NH Department of Transportation, local public works departments, and local boards to promote bicycling and pedestrian connectivity and non-motorized transportation networks.
- B. Focus health/wellness education and outreach efforts on local recreation providers (e.g. target recreation directors, recreation commissions, and involve Governors Council on Physical Education, Department of Education, Healthy Communities Foundation, etc.).
- C. Investigate and encourage local participation in statewide health promotion and education activities (e.g. breast cancer walks, March into May, Great American Smoke Out, Great American Work Out).
- D. Partner with hospitals, local wellness teams, and schools to coordinate education efforts and develop cross-promotion efforts.

II. Objective: Increase public awareness of access and opportunities for recreation and physical activity locally.

Strategies:

- A. Cross promote health programs as aspects of other initiatives and incorporate physical activity within other organizations' activities (e.g. establish historic walking tours in conjunction with the local historical society or historic commission).
- B. Work with business and industries to promote understanding of the importance of recreational opportunities for employee health (e.g. Business and Industry Association, etc.).
- C. Develop statewide database (web site) that lists ideas and programs that have been successful.

III.Objective: Consider special needs of youth, elderly and disabled populations in promoting health and wellness through outdoor recreation.

Strategies:

- A. Improve existing and new recreation areas by enhancing non-motorized (bicycle/pedestrian) accessibility and connectivity. Non-motorized access is particularly important to youth, elderly and disabled populations.
- B. Encourage lifetime recreation and physical activity curriculum in school programs (e.g. bicycling, walking, etc.).
- C. Encourage the Department of Resources and Economic Development and the Fish and Game Department to develop long-term disability plans for public lands and implement universal designs.

IV.Objective: Promote health and wellness messages in existing recreation areas.

Strategies:

- A. Encourage the State and communities to adopt no-smoking policies in high-density recreation areas (e.g. State and community parks), and emphasize awareness of cigarette butts as litter).
- B. Encourage health food concession alternatives at parks and sporting events (e.g. beaches, swimming pools, football games, etc.).
- C. Encourage communities to post the health benefits of physical activity in existing recreation areas (e.g. post health messages and mileage markers along a town pathway or trail).
- D. Encourage use of appropriate equipment in parks (e.g. use of helmets in skate parks, etc.).
- E. Encourage parks to promote safe playground standards.

SELECTED CONTACTS & INFORMATION SOURCES

[New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services](#)

[University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension](#)

[US Department of Health and Human Services](#)

[US Centers for Disease Control](#)

[Appalachian Mountain Club](#)

PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

OVERVIEW

While emphasis must be placed on addressing these six individual issue areas, there is an overarching need to improve upon the way outdoor recreation planning is incorporated into larger, broader decision-making in the state. Improving upon this process will help improve overall plan implementation and is critical to making these suggested recommendations more viable and feasible. With this in mind, improving overall coordination will be the first step in moving towards SCORP implementation.

The SCORP Steering Committee emphasized, and the SCORP Public Advisory Committee concurred, that SCORP planning should be an on-going effort with emphasis on implementation and progress. The goal is to keep the SCORP alive and up to date. Discussion focused on revamping collaboration and joint outdoor recreation planning efforts to produce a more consistent, yearly process.

In order to foster plan implementation, the SCORP Steering Committee recommended that the first plan of action should be to establish a more permanent outdoor recreation review committee or oversight committee. Such a committee is deemed critical to facilitating plan implementation, and addressing critical recreation issues. Given that a wide variety of agencies and organizations are involved in outdoor recreation provision in New Hampshire, it stands that wide range of perspectives should be included in ongoing, coordinated discussions about priorities and strategies.

The SCORP Steering Committee felt that a statewide recreation committee could respond, as an established entity, to statewide recreation-related challenges, research needs, and issues that arise in the ensuing five years before another SCORP plan is developed. Establishing a permanent committee that meets at least on an annual basis will make a better planning process than one that starts when a new plan is needed and stops when the plan is finalized.

In addition, efforts should be made to increase the awareness of the SCORP and its recommendation among state agencies, possibly through the Council on Resources and Development (CORD), as well as via other legislatively mandated and organized committees. OSP will work to improve these linkages, identify possible partnerships and will promote understanding of how other initiatives, missions, and goals relate to the wide reaching subject of outdoor recreation.

NEXT STEPS

Oversight Committee

To aid implementation of individual strategies set forth in this plan, OSP, in conjunction with DRED, will work to establish an outdoor recreation oversight committee as specifically recommended by the current SCORP Steering Committee. In the interim, the existing SCORP Steering Committee will continue to meet until this more permanent

committee can be established. The current committee will work with OSP and DRED to develop specific strategies for establishing the role and membership of oversight committee and establish initial goals and priorities.

While specifics are yet to be determined, the SCORP Steering Committee felt that is important that the State leadership be involved in identifying this new committee. In addition this group also suggested several starting points for discussion. Two potential alternatives mentioned would make use of existing committees. One suggestion is to utilize the existing Open Project Selection Process Advisory Panel. Another suggestion is to reappoint, in a more permanent fashion, the existing SCORP Steering Committee. While the exact makeup is still unknown, the new committee is envisioned to meet at least on an annual basis and focus on plan progress, partnership development, and implementation strategies.

The current SCORP Steering Committee felt it important to allow this new entity to establish SCORP priorities and a more formal action plan. Therefore, an action plan will not be included in this phase of SCORP planning process, but will be included in the next phase. This will be an important early task for the formalized oversight committee.

OSP's Role

Beyond early efforts to work with State leadership in the development of an outdoor recreation oversight committee, the Office of State Planning will also continue to oversee the SCORP and promote plan implementation. In general:

- OSP, through an ongoing agreement with DRED, will be responsible for measuring progress and coordinating planning efforts for SCORP maintenance in the interim before the next SCORP plan is developed in 2007.
- OSP will utilize an oversight committee to identify yearly goals and priorities based on the list of established SCORP recommendations and will review annual progress and success. A SCORP action plan will be produced to provide guidance and direction about the priorities and potential partners.
- Under the review of the committee, OSP will evaluate the possibility of developing a coordinated *outdoor recreation research plan* to identify statewide recreation-related research needs, as well as identify priorities, partnerships and potential funding sources for completing such research.